



CITY OF YONKERS

**POLICE
REFORM
COMMITTEE**

**REFORM AND
REINVENTION PLAN**

MARCH 2021



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A Message from Mayor Mike Spano



Over the past year, communities across the country have gathered to pound the pavement to demand lasting social change – seeking reforms to Police Departments nationwide. Protesters gathered in search of a common goal – to have their voices heard. Following the tragic event surrounding George Floyd’s murder, thousands of people peacefully protested in Yonkers. These protests acted as a sounding board for the need to address the systemic bias and inequality that exists in our nation. While the recent protests called for national police reforms, it also gave Yonkers another opportunity to look within and seek improvements to the Yonkers Police Department.

Following Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order No. 203, a 25-member Yonkers Police Reform Committee (“YPRC”) was established and have carefully reviewed the policies, practices, and operations of the Yonkers Police Department (“YPD”). In gaining a greater understanding and insight into residents’ experiences and interactions with the YPD, the Committee opened up with a discussion about police-community relations to the public.

The YPRC held public hearings and met with their respective communities to ensure that those who wanted to be heard not only had an opportunity to share their thoughts but felt comfortable speaking with a familiar face and a trusted voice in the community. The Yonkers Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative brought forth by the YPRC represent the outcomes of discussions with our communities’ vision for a police department that reflects our city’s diversity, fosters trust and fairness and maintains mutual respect in public safety.

Nearly 15 years ago, the United States Department of Justice initiated an investigation into excessive use of force and discriminatory policing by the Yonkers Police Department. Since then, Yonkers is a city that has implemented some of the most progressive and effective policing policies and programs in the country. The reform actions Yonkers has taken through its comprehensive police reform agenda, supported by the Department of Justice, the Yonkers City Council, the Yonkers Police Department, and local civic leaders, have strengthened police-community relations and set the stage for change in other cities across New York State. I was pleased to see that the reforms already enacted by the City of Yonkers incorporate many of the objectives set out to be achieved through this New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. Reforms include employing proper use of force, limiting stops and searches, fully investigating misconduct complaints, establishing comprehensive data collection, initiating community policing, expanding in-service training, and ensuring police accountability. Among these reforms, it is noteworthy to mention the most recent, the City of Yonkers launched a police body-worn camera pilot program which was at the forefront of the community’s priorities when protesting for police reforms.

Yonkers residents can take great pride in the work of the YPRC, which has presented a complete set of recommendations that will further advance the progress made in achieving trust and respect between police and our communities. While the City of Yonkers has its work cut out in seeing that these recommendations are put into action, I am confident that we will get the job done with our communities’ support and the partnership of our County, State, and Federal leaders. I thank every member of the Committee for their hard work and dedication to this most important initiative and pledge my continued support in the on-going fight for social justice.


MIKE SPANO
Mayor



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to Governor Andrew Cuomo's Executive Order requiring local governments in New York State to adopt a policing reform plan by April 1, 2021, the City of Yonkers established the Yonkers Police Reform Committee ("YPRC") tasked with initiating a fact-based and open dialogue about the City's public safety needs and the community's vision for the role of the Yonkers Police Department ("YPD") in meeting those needs. The YPRC is comprised of 25 key stakeholders of various sectors within Yonkers including community members, non-profit and faith-based leaders, YPD members, the District Attorney's office, a local public defender, and local elected officials.

Working in collaboration with members of the Yonkers Police Department, the YPRC carefully and methodically considered four key sections of police reform as provided in the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Resources & Guide for Public Officials and Citizens (the "Guidebook"):

- What Functions Should the Police Perform?
- Employing Smart and Effective Policing Standards and Strategies
- Fostering Community-Oriented Leadership, Culture and Accountability
- Recruiting and Supporting Excellent Personnel

For each section, the Yonkers Police Department provided the YPRC with information and data on the current state of the Department, including its operations, policies, and procedures relative to the topics presented within the section. Weekly in-person and remote meetings were held to review the information, identify Focus Areas, and develop achievable reform recommendations. The YPRC also held several public hearings to gather comments from Yonkers community members and stakeholders.

As a result of the dozens of police reform measures already implemented by the City of Yonkers as part of the comprehensive police reform agreement entered into between the City and the United States Department of Justice in 2016, the YPRC found the Yonkers Police Department to be ahead of the curve in addressing many of the issues identified within the Guidebook. Through this collaborative process, the YPRC identified eight focus areas, incorporating 22 recommendations for improving response to service calls and building trust between police and the community it serves.

The following report details the key issues identified by the YPRC and the recommended reform measures which aim to address these issues and support a police workforce that's representative and responsive to the community. The enactment of many of the recommended reforms is subject to City and/or State approval and the availability of funding necessary to adequately support these measures. Successful implementation will require continued planning and coordination between community stakeholders and the Yonkers Police Department with support from the City of Yonkers, Westchester County, the State of New York, and the Federal government.

Overview of YPRC Recommendations

FOCUS AREA #1: ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND HOMELESSNESS CALLS

The YPRC found that the YPD responds to a high volume of mental health calls involving the homeless population. YPD has established a Homeless Outreach Team that provides assistance with various services, including medical care, psychiatric care, substance abuse counseling, and placement in shelters. YPRC recommendations:

- 1.1 Establish a Mental Health Crisis Outreach Team and Policy** inclusive of trained professionals that could serve as the primary responders to calls that do not involve a legal issue or high threat of violence or risk to the individual or others.
- 1.2 Improve and expand programming at Westchester County-operated homeless shelters** to better support the mental health needs of the homeless community.

FOCUS AREA #2: IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CALLER, DISPATCH AND POLICE

The YPRC found that police often arrive to the scene of an incident that differs from the initial call for dispatch. This impacts police preparedness and may increase the likelihood of a negative interaction between police and members of the community. YPRC recommendations:

- 1.3 Establish and raise public awareness of best practices for calling 911**, providing residents with tools and resources for reporting an emergency.
- 1.4 Provide additional training to dispatchers for screening mental health emergencies**

FOCUS AREA #3: LAW ENFORCEMENT PRESENCE IN SCHOOLS

The YPD's presence in schools is currently limited to calls for assistance involving an incident warranting an arrest. The YPRC found that the City of Yonkers and YPD have made significant progress in breaking the "school to prison pipeline" through recent policy changes and youth programs. YPRC recommendations:

- 1.5 Keep police presence in schools limited to student engagement opportunities**, including school visits to speak at student assemblies and to introduce YPD community outreach programs designed specifically to engage youth and young adults in the local school district. Police can have an important role in supporting students through these programs in partnership with the school community.

FOCUS AREA #4: PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY POLICING STRATEGIES

The YPRC found that the YPD trains and engages all officers in strategic Community Policing. Members are also currently scheduled to go through a procedural justice training program – including implicit bias training and a full day dedicated to discussion on racism – sponsored by Yale University. The Department also has robust community outreach and violence interruption programs, as well as a dedicated Community Affairs Unit tasked with developing relationships with residents and businesses in every neighborhood. YPRC recommendations:

- 2.1 Develop a comprehensive Community Policing Strategic Plan** to ensure the entire Department understands and supports a policing model reflecting the desired vision, values, and goals of the community.
- 2.2 Bring YPD Community Affairs programs into neighborhoods** by partnering with community organizations to identify neighborhood locations that could host Community Affairs programs while also serving as “safe places” for families to gather and for parent and youth support services.
- 2.3 Establish Consistency in Community Outreach Patrols** to better familiarize precinct officers with the community; proactively offer resources and assistance to those in need; and establish positive police-community interactions.
- 2.4 Invest in Marketing for Community Affairs programs** to attract a broader pool of residents who could benefit from the programs and positive interaction with members of the police department.
- 2.5 Establish and Deploy a Clergy Response Team** into neighborhoods to help foster on-going opportunities for discussion between police and the community.

FOCUS AREA #5: ADDRESS BIAS-BASED STOPS, SEARCHES, AND ARRESTS

The YPRC found that YPD does not formally engage in discriminatory or bias-based stops, searches, and arrests; chokeholds were banned in 2012; and neck control holds are limited to deadly physical force situations. The YPD’s use of the Precision Policing Model allows the Department to focus on known persistent offenders and keep stops to a minimum. While recognizing YPD’s progressive policy changes, members of the YPRC feel, whether intentional or not, that bias-based stops may still occur. YPRC recommendations:

- 2.6 Improve options for reporting discriminatory stops and searches**, including establishing a website for public reporting and raising awareness.
- 2.7 Strengthen respect for citizens rights and police procedure during traffic stops** by creating an education program focused on informing citizens of their rights and the rights of police officers in conducting an investigation.

FOCUS AREA #6: CITIZEN OVERSIGHT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TRANSPARENCY

The YPRC found that YPD has policies in place specifically for reporting and reviewing misconduct and use-of-force cases. The Department provides several methods for filing complaints. Records indicate a low level of community complaints against officers. The City most recently established a police body-worn camera program that will provide yet another layer of assurance for both the community and police officers that public safety services are performed to the highest standard. YPRC recommendations:

- 3.1 Improve public access to YPD policies, procedures, and disciplinary actions** by posting internal policies on its website and disclosing the handling of police misconduct cases, including any disciplinary actions taken.
- 3.2 Pursue a performance evaluation program for officers** that incorporates metrics based on Community Policing principles.
- 3.3 Improve the functions of the Police Professional Standards Review Committee (“PPSRC”)** to ensure adequate community representation and reporting of Committee activities. The YPRC also suggests the City consider incorporating the functions of the proposed Civilian Complaint Review Board (“CCRB”) into the existing PPSRC structure.

FOCUS AREA #7: RECRUITING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

The YPRC found that the City of Yonkers has been actively working to achieve a more diverse police workforce and has made progress in increasing the number of African American and Hispanic officers within the Department. Minority populations, particularly African Americans, remain underrepresented within the workforce and additional hiring and recruitment measures are necessary to address this important issue. YPRC members also identified the importance of prioritizing the recruitment and hiring of officers who were raised in Yonkers or who have lived in Yonkers for several years. YPRC recommendations:

- 4.1 Expand NYS Civil Service Banding Zones for Police Entrance Examination scores** to provide a larger, more diverse pool of qualified candidates that could be considered for hire.

- 4.2 Strengthen the residency requirement for police officer candidates** by extending the period of time that a police officer candidate must be a Yonkers resident, both prior to taking the written exam and post-hiring.
- 4.3 Award points on the Police Examination for long-term residency and for those of underrepresented populations** to boost efforts for achieving a workforce that is representative of the diversity of Yonkers' population.
- 4.4 Establish a Police Examination Preparation Course in Yonkers high schools** to help students gain information and familiarity with the police examination and increase their confidence and comfort with taking the test.
- 4.5 Develop a long-term Police Recruitment Strategy for the African American community** aimed at increasing the pool of African American police officer candidates. The City of Yonkers should also push for the creation of State and/or Federal police diversity recruitment programs to fund marketing and community outreach activities targeting underrepresented populations within local police departments.

FOCUS AREA 8: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR POLICE

The YPRC identified the mental health and wellness of the men and women who serve as police officers as being critical to their effectiveness in serving the community. As an issue impacting police officers in every jurisdiction across the country, State and Federal resources must be made available to local law enforcement agencies for police mental health and wellness programs. YPRC recommendations:

- 4.6 Provide mental health support for police** by utilizing the resources of an established Mental Health Crisis Outreach Team, as discussed in Recommendation 1.1, and ensure intergovernmental coordination for additional services as may be required.
- 4.7 Engage and train officers in mental health intervention** by establishing an open line of communication between YPD leadership and officers on various situations and incidents impacting their mental and physical health and their ability to perform their job functions. YPD should explore mental health and wellness training opportunities for supervisors to gain strategies and techniques for recognizing warning signs and applying effective intervention.



POLICE
CITY OF YONKERS

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I. THE FUNCTIONS & ROLE OF POLICE IN THE COMMUNITY

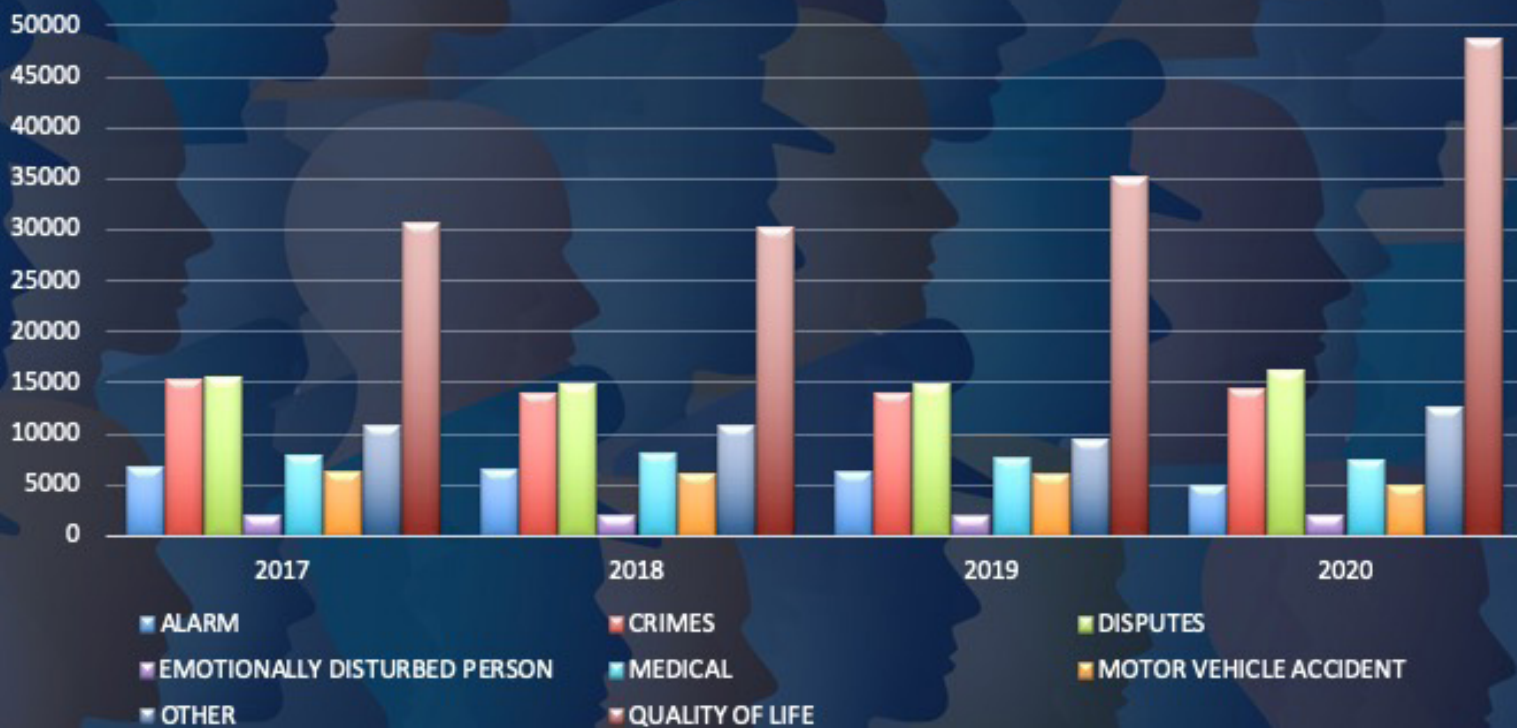
To ensure a fact-based dialogue, the YPRC took time to review crime statistics, data on dispatch calls, and community complaints about YPD. The objective was for members to understand the primary functions of YPD in the community, the reasons for calling 911, the situations in which police self-initiate interventions; and the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with policing felt by residents.

In 2019 there were over 270,000 calls for service, mostly general service calls for assistance relating to traffic issues, downed wires, missing persons, property calls, noise complaints, and other violation or misdemeanor level offenses.

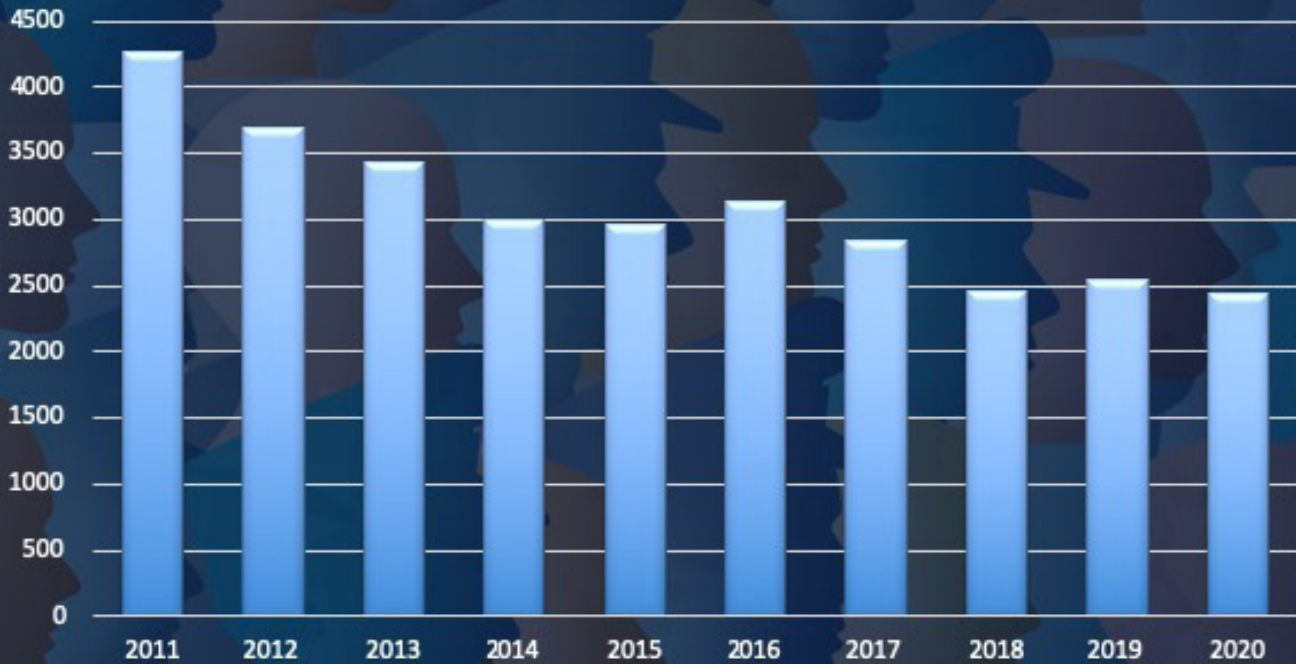
Following the data review, the YPRC focused on identifying the factors that determine how police respond to a call and the circumstances that are most likely to result in a negative interaction between police and the community.

The graphs in Section I relate to the YPD's calls for service from 2017-2020, and City of Yonkers' crime statistics from 2011-2020. The purpose of the referenced graphs is to provide a proper perspective of crimes that occurred and calls for service in the city.

Calls for Service 2017-2020



Part I Crime Statistics 2011-2020



PART I CRIME STATISTICS

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Murder	7	4	6	3	6	9	8	1	6	7
Rape	36	28	47	36	54	34	36	31	42	38
Robbery	463	422	390	357	361	408	271	213	224	154
Aggravated Assault	591	679	615	581	529	493	495	460	436	411
Burglary	753	534	470	414	378	422	360	270	208	253
Larceny	2123	1799	1662	1397	1357	1516	1481	1326	1467	1340
Motor Vehicle Theft	298	231	236	200	273	249	182	156	153	233
TOTAL	4271	3697	3426	2988	2958	3131	2833	2457	2536	2436

Part II Crime Statistics 2011-2020



PART II CRIME STATISTICS

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Arson	14	13	8	12	9	14	12	6	14	10
Kidnappings	18	12	11	18	18	10	13	18	10	13
Controlled Substance Sale	243	192	156	106	43	56	52	69	65	40
Controlled Substance Possession	1461	1977	2209	1225	538	635	695	1051	750	491
Dangerous Weapons	187	152	187	162	69	96	77	82	65	50
Sex Offenses	101	114	72	59	55	44	41	41	53	56
Forgery & Counterfeiting	84	103	115	119	152	179	127	300	115	80
Stolen Property Possession	28	34	22	20	28	24	18	14	33	45
Criminal Mischief	1036	899	859	814	818	840	808	668	660	668
Fraud	165	233	281	264	207	194	274	311	295	251
Simple Assault	1087	1008	908	779	809	669	660	657	649	610
Driving Under Influence	114	133	138	137	79	71	50	67	72	35
Disorderly Conduct	226	252	248	162	86	64	49	70	68	24
Loitering	2	0	2	0	0	0	29	3	0	14
All Other Offenses	1330	1091	1024	914	1156	1220	1143	942	1061	865
TOTAL	6,397	6,498	6,565	5,090	4,215	4,283	4,175	4,448	4,047	3,337

FOCUS AREA #1: ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND HOMELESSNESS CALLS

The YPRC carefully considered the role of police in responding to calls involving mental illness or substance abuse. The Yonkers Police Department responds to a high volume of calls involving the homeless population particularly in the Getty Square section of Downtown Yonkers, many of whom have mental illness and/or substance abuse problems. In working to adequately respond to the daily calls for service relating to the homeless presence in this area, the Department established a Homeless Outreach Team staffed by a police officer and a sergeant with assistance from two additional officers who are assigned to Getty Square.

The Homeless Outreach Team offers assistance with various services, including medical care, psychiatric care, substance abuse counseling, and placement in shelters. YPD Homeless Outreach works directly with the Westchester County Department of Social Services, which deploys a dedicated Mobile Mental Health Team Case Manager with the YPD Homeless Outreach Officer to conduct regular three-hour ride-alongs to proactively offer assistance with the aforementioned services. The YPD Homeless Outreach Team is also assisted by the Westchester County Department of Health, which has at times deployed substance abuse counselors and mental health specialists to help reach those in need of services.

The YPRC supports the Yonkers Police Department's efforts in proactively addressing response needs relating to the homeless population in Getty Square. However, additional social service support is needed for response to calls relating to mental health and substance abuse issues both among the homeless and those in other communities.

YPRC Recommendations

1.1 Establish a Mental Health Crisis Outreach Team and Policy

The YPRC recommends establishing a mental health crisis outreach team and policy inclusive of trained professionals that could serve as the primary responders to calls that do not involve a legal issue or high threat of violence or risk to the individual or others. Police officers trained in de-escalation tactics could provide support to the team for security as necessary. The team would also include a trained crisis manager at the 911 Call Center to help identify and assist with mental health calls. Models supporting a non-police response to mental health calls have been implemented in other cities and have demonstrated effectiveness in de-escalation while freeing up police resources. The YPD should also develop and institute a Mental Health Crisis Policy for responding to emotionally disturbed persons and people in crisis.

The YPRC recognizes the significant costs associated with establishing a Mental Health Crisis Outreach Team, which could come at an annual personnel expense ranging between \$117,000–\$127,500 per position. YPD should further explore models developed in other cities and consider the feasibility of establishing such a program in Yonkers. The City of Yonkers should seek intergovernmental assistance and coordination with County and State agencies to support this program.

1.2 Improve and expand programming at Westchester County-operated homeless shelters

The YPRC supports improving and expanding programs at Westchester County-operated homeless shelters to better support the homeless community's mental health needs. Mental health and substance abuse issues are prevalent among the homeless population in Westchester County. Too often, local police agencies are left responsible for addressing homelessness issues by way of law enforcement. This is not an effective, appropriate, nor fair approach to meeting the needs of this vulnerable population and community. The YPRC urges the City of Yonkers to engage Westchester County, New York State, and community organizations in establishing a greater level of resources and support services to provide for the needs of the County's homeless population.

FOCUS AREA #2: IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CALLER, DISPATCH, AND POLICE

The Yonkers 911 Call Center is staffed by trained Public Service Dispatchers who route calls to Police, Fire, or EMS for emergency response. One of the key issues identified through the review of data and discussion with YPD is that the outcome of an incident requiring police response is often different from the call for dispatch. This is an issue that impacts police preparedness when responding to an incident and may increase the likelihood of a negative interaction between police and members of the community. The cause of miscommunication is most often a result of incomplete or inaccurate information provided by the caller to dispatch.

YPRC Recommendations

1.3 Establish and Raise Public Awareness of Best Practices for Calling 911

The YPD currently posts information about 911 calling on its website. However, this limited level of public outreach may not sufficiently reach the public. The YPRC recommends the YPD develop a more comprehensive and accessible 911 Calling Guide providing residents with best practices for reporting an emergency. YPD could initiate a public awareness campaign around these best practices to inform and educate residents so they may be best prepared to report a 911 emergency.

1.4 Incorporate Screening for Mental Health Emergencies Into Training for Dispatchers

Public Service Dispatchers currently receive four months of initial training plus three annual training days to support their preparedness for accurately screening calls and conveying details to YPD for a response. The YPRC recommends YPD seek additional training opportunities that may be available for dispatchers to support mental health call screening. Training days come at the expense of about \$13,000 per day to the City, so funding for this training through State or Federal grant programs should be explored.

FOCUS AREA #3: LAW ENFORCEMENT PRESENCE IN SCHOOLS

As cited in the NYS Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Guidebook, the use of the criminal justice system for handling student disciplinary issues has helped fuel the “school to prison pipeline” that has most impacted students of color. While School Resource Officer (SRO) programs, which Yonkers funded until 2009, may be intended to enhance school safety, the YPRC has real pressing concerns. The YPRC remains concerned that the presence of law enforcement officers carrying a gun in school represents a negative image that can be intimidating to students and counterproductive to efforts to build trust between police and youth.

The Yonkers Public Schools currently utilize civilian School Safety Officers to provide for security at school buildings; however, police are called in for assistance if necessary to respond to an incident warranting an arrest. In such cases, the student is brought to the Community Affairs Division for arrest processing. In this area, the Yonkers Police Department has an important role and has made tremendous strides in its efforts to break the pipeline.

In late 2019, the Yonkers Police Department integrated the Youth Division with the Community Affairs Unit and brought a new civilian youth advisor into the division. This allowed for a reinvention of how youth arrests are handled. Beginning in 2020, all youths arrested for misdemeanors are interviewed by a Community Affairs staff member for eligibility in the Youth Court Diversion Program. Youth who meet the parameters and volunteer to be in the program are diverted from the Family Court System into the YPD Youth Court program, thereby keeping them out of the juvenile justice system. The arrested youth is then tried by a group of peers and sentenced to serve time working in various programs run by the Community Affairs Division members. This program’s benefit is keeping youth out of the court system and engaging them in completing community service and positive interaction with police officers and community groups. These interactions build mentorships and job skills that build character and help change their perception of law enforcement officers.

YPRC Recommendations

1.5 Keep Police Presence in Schools Limited to Student Engagement Opportunities

The YPRC supports YPD’s new approach to youth arrests and recommends that police presence in school remains limited to school visits to speak at student assemblies and introduce YPD community outreach programs. Many of the YPD’s community outreach programs are designed to specifically engage youth and young adults in the local school district (i.e., Cops & Kids, Youth Police Initiative, Yonkers Police Cadets, etc.). These engagements place Yonkers Police officers and local youth in a non-enforcement environment, leading to positive communication opportunities for all parties. Both officers and students get the opportunity to exchange ideas and information freely and learn from each other by sharing perspectives. These programs can be a valuable resource, especially for engaging troubled youth before they get into trouble with the law. Police can have an important role in supporting students through these programs in partnership with the school community.

II. EMPLOYING SMART AND EFFECTIVE POLICING STANDARDS AND STRATEGIES

Effective policing requires standards and strategies that advance the goals of protecting the community, engaging with the citizenry in a meaningful way, and demonstrating respect for individuals during law enforcement interactions.

The YPRC closely reviewed the core principles of policing employed by the Yonkers Police Department and how YPD officers interact with the public. The Committee explored policing strategies that have demonstrated success, particularly those of Procedural Justice and Community Policing, while also focusing on practices that have raised public concern, such as “broken windows” policing, “stop and frisk,” discriminatory profiling, no-knock warrants, chokeholds and other uses-of-force.

While many of the policing practices that have negatively impacted communities of color have been addressed by the YPD in recent years, the YPRC identified several opportunities to improve standards and interaction with the public.

FOCUS AREA #4: PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY POLICING STRATEGIES

The Yonkers Police Department engages in strategic community policing. All officers are trained in community policing practices in the Police Academy and in-service through the Training Division. Treating every contact with a community member as an opportunity for positive engagement is a concept addressed in the YPD’s training curriculum. The mission statement of the YPD parallels the principles of procedural justice, and all members are currently scheduled to go through a procedural justice training program – including implicit bias training and a full day dedicated to discussion on racism – sponsored by Yale University. The YPD is also currently implementing Project ABLE (Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement) and enhanced de-escalation through ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics. These programs include modules that focus on racism and racial issues within the community. After a majority of Yonkers Police members complete these training programs, the Department will evaluate their effectiveness through a review of complaint data and on-going conversations with community stakeholders and community-based organizations.

Yonkers Police Precinct Commanders meet on a monthly basis with local community leaders and stakeholders to discuss crime topics and strategies. These public meetings, which are published online, are organized by the local Precinct Community Council and provide an opportunity for police and residents to work together in addressing public safety issues and quality of life complaints.

The Yonkers Police Department also has robust community outreach and violence interruption programs, including a City-supported collaboration with the YMCA SNUG program, which utilizes an evidence-based model to identify individuals with a high risk of engaging in gun violence. The YPD has over a dozen police officers assigned to steady neighborhood patrol and a dedicated Community Affairs Unit tasked with developing relationships with residents and businesses in every neighborhood, as well as overseeing over 40 different community outreach programs. These programs have been particularly effective in engaging youth in recreational activities and strengthening the police-community relationship.

The YPRC supports the strides made by the YPD in embracing community participation as part of its policing model and encourages the Department to advance additional measures that will strengthen relationships and collaboration between police and the communities they serve while fostering an atmosphere of respect, openness, and transparency.

YPRC Recommendations

2.1 Develop a Comprehensive Community Policing Strategic Plan

While community policing principles are incorporated into YPD's daily operations, the YPRC recommends YPD develop a comprehensive community policing strategic plan that identifies goals and objectives related to community policing and focuses its priorities, resources, programs, and activities toward achieving measurable outcomes. The strategic plan can guide YPD policy, training, and operations and will better ensure the entire Department understands and supports a policing model reflecting the desired vision, values, and goals of the community.

2.2 Bring YPD Community Affairs Programs Into Neighborhoods

The YPRC believes these programs can have an even greater impact by moving them outside of City-operated facilities and deeper into Yonkers' communities. Establishing neighborhood program sites familiar and accessible to area residents could help attract more participation in these programs and facilitate positive police-community interactions. The YPD should partner with community organizations to identify neighborhood locations that could host Community Affairs programs while also serving as "safe places" for families to gather and for parent and youth support services.

2.3 Consistency in Community Outreach Patrols

The frequency in the movement of officers between various precincts and divisions of the Department leads to officers not remaining in a particular community for an extended period of time. This impacts the ability of the Department to solidify relationships and build trust between officers and community members. The YPRC recommends that the YPD establish consistent community outreach patrols within Yonkers neighborhoods, preferably on foot, to familiarize precinct officers with the community, proactively offer resources and assistance to those in need, and establish positive police-community interactions. The City's cost for the addition of a dedicated foot patrol is estimated to be up to \$180,000 per position, including benefits and overtime to backfill any vacancy created.

2.4 Invest in Marketing for Community Affairs programs

While the YPD Community Affairs programs have proven to be valuable and impactful on the lives of those who take advantage of the resources made available, the YPRC believes there are still too many residents, particularly youth, who are unaware or misinformed about these programs. Developing and launching a robust marketing and branding campaign for Community Affairs programs could help introduce them to a broader pool of residents who could benefit from the programs and positive interaction with members of the police department. While existing City resources may be utilized, an effective professional marketing campaign could cost up to \$200,000 annually. The YPRC recommends the YPD seek State and Federal assistance through available programs supporting such efforts.

2.5 Establish and Deploy a Clergy Response Team

The YPRC recommends establishing a clergy response team to deploy into neighborhoods to help build police-community relationships. The team could play an integral role in fostering on-going opportunities for discussion between police and the community on issues of importance and may assist in YPD response to crisis incidents.

FOCUS AREA #5: ADDRESS BIAS-BASED STOPS, SEARCHES, AND ARRESTS

The YPD uses the Precision Policing Model built around the theory that a very small subset of repeat offenders are responsible for most crime. YPD is aware of its persistent offenders and their custody statistics. This has allowed the YPD to maintain low crime levels while keeping stops to an extreme minimum. YPD does not regularly engage in the Broken Windows theory unless it is to the benefit of community outreach. For example, YPD is now working with local leaders in locations that have on-going quality of life complaints to achieve compliance through cooperation rather than through enforcement. The four pillars of Procedural Justice play a key role in this effort.

It should also be noted that the Yonkers Police Department banned chokeholds in 2012, and neck control holds are limited to deadly physical force situations (i.e., life and death struggle necessary to save the life of an officer or other). The YPRC also recognizes that the YPD does not formally engage in discriminatory or bias-based stops, searches, and arrests. However, members of the YPRC expressed concern that these occurrences, whether intentional or not, still occur in Yonkers. Racial and ethnic profiling can erode the community's trust in law enforcement and unfairly targets minority communities. Proper measures should be enacted to prevent and address any such incidents.

YPRC Recommendations

2.6 Reporting Discriminative Stops and Searches

The YPRC recommends the City of Yonkers establish a website made available to the public for reporting improper discriminatory stops and searches. Reported incidents should be forwarded to the existing Police Professional Standards Review Committee and/or an established Citizen Review Board for further investigation. Once the website is created, the YPRC suggests the YPD have an active role in raising public awareness about the website to ensure the community is aware of this service.

2.7 Respecting Citizen Rights and Police Procedure During Traffic Stops

Traffic stops can be a tense scene for both police and those in the vehicle being pulled over. A driver may be uncertain about the reason for being stopped and feel their rights are being violated. Police may be uncertain about whether or not the person they are approaching has a weapon in the vehicle and may feel their safety is threatened. This is a situation that can quickly escalate and as pointed out by members of the YPRC, sometimes escalation occurs simply as a result of a driver asking an officer for the reason for being pulled over.

The YPRC recommends the creation of an education program focused on providing the community with an understanding of best practices for police and drivers during a traffic stop and informing citizens of their rights and the rights of police officers in conducting their investigation.



III. FOSTERING COMMUNITY-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Transparency and accountability are essential in establishing mutual trust between the community and the police. The community must have confidence in their police department members that serve with respect toward citizens and feel assured that the Department will not tolerate abuse of authority, including excessive force and other misconduct or practices that are inconsistent with community values.

The YPRC carefully reviewed the systems currently in place to provide transparency, accountability, and leadership within the YPD. The YPRC paid close attention to the policies and practices for reviewing the use-of-force and misconduct among police officers, as well as civilian oversight and public disclosure of such instances.

FOCUS AREA #6: CITIZEN OVERSIGHT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TRANSPARENCY

The Yonkers Police Department's policy is to completely investigate all allegations of misconduct involving officers to preserve the integrity and reputation of the Department and protect personnel against unjust accusations. The YPD has policies in place specifically for reporting and reviewing misconduct and use-of-force cases. Early intervention, use-of-force reporting, and investigation/progressive discipline are all designed to establish records of officer behavior and Department action. Use-of-force incidents may be reviewed by civilian members of the Police Professional Standard Review Committee ("PPSRC"). When appropriate, cases may be referred to the Westchester County District Attorney's Office.

The YPRC reviewed the procedures for citizen reporting of police misconduct and found that the YPD provides for several methods of filing complaints against the Department, including in-person complaints at any police or internal affairs facility or by mail, phone, or fax. The Citizen Complaint Form is available in English and Spanish on the YPD's website and may be filed anonymously. Records of Citizen Complaint Forms received indicate a low level of community complaints against YPD officers. Outcomes of investigations into citizen complaints are generally reported to the complainant, however not to the public as per Section 50A of New York State Civil Rights Law, currently in litigation.

The YPRC acknowledges that the City of Yonkers has made great strides in increasing transparency and accountability within the YPD since the Department of Justice investigation into excessive force was initiated in 2007. The City most recently established a department-wide police body-worn camera program that will provide yet another layer of assurance for both the community and police officers to show public safety services are performed to the highest standard.

YPRC Recommendations

3.1 Improve Public Access to YPD Policies, Procedures, and Disciplinary Actions

One of the key concerns for the YPRC is the lack of publicity and accessibility to police policies, complaints against officers, and the handling of disciplinary actions addressing officer misconduct. The Yonkers Police Department does not currently publicize its internal policies and procedures. Public access is limited to the filing of a Freedom of Information Law Request. The YPRC recommends that the YPD post its internal policies on its website, particularly those regarding misconduct and use-of-force. This could help improve transparency and the community's understanding of these important policies while ensuring confidence that YPD takes use-of-force and misconduct incidents seriously.

The Committee also recommends that the YPD develop a process for disclosing the handling of police misconduct and the disciplinary actions taken in any such case.

3.2 Explore Performance Evaluations Incorporating Community Policing Principles

With the exception of probationary officers, YPD does not currently have a process for conducting performance evaluations of police officers. The YPRC recommends that YPD work with the community to develop a performance evaluation program for officers that incorporates metrics based on Community Policing principles. This type of program could help address issues like officer rudeness, which is an area of concern for many Committee members. It could also help the Department better evaluate officers' strengths and weaknesses. The YPD should explore performance evaluation programs that have been successfully implemented in other cities and use them to guide the development of a program that works for Yonkers. The establishment of a performance evaluation program would be a negotiated item within the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

3.3 Improve Functions of the Police Professional Standards Review Committee ("PPSRC")

The Police Professional Standards Review Committee, comprised of civilians and sworn personnel, has been established to provide the community the opportunity to review internal investigations. These investigations may include allegations of excessive use of force; abuse of authority; discourtesy; and use of offensive language, including slurs relating to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and disability. PPSRC members review the fairness, thoroughness, completeness, and timeliness of completed investigations and identify other areas for further investigation. A confidential report of their findings is completed and returned to the commanding officer of the Internal Affairs Division and the Police Commissioner. The report may also recommend any policy and procedure or training changes PPSRC deems to be necessary.

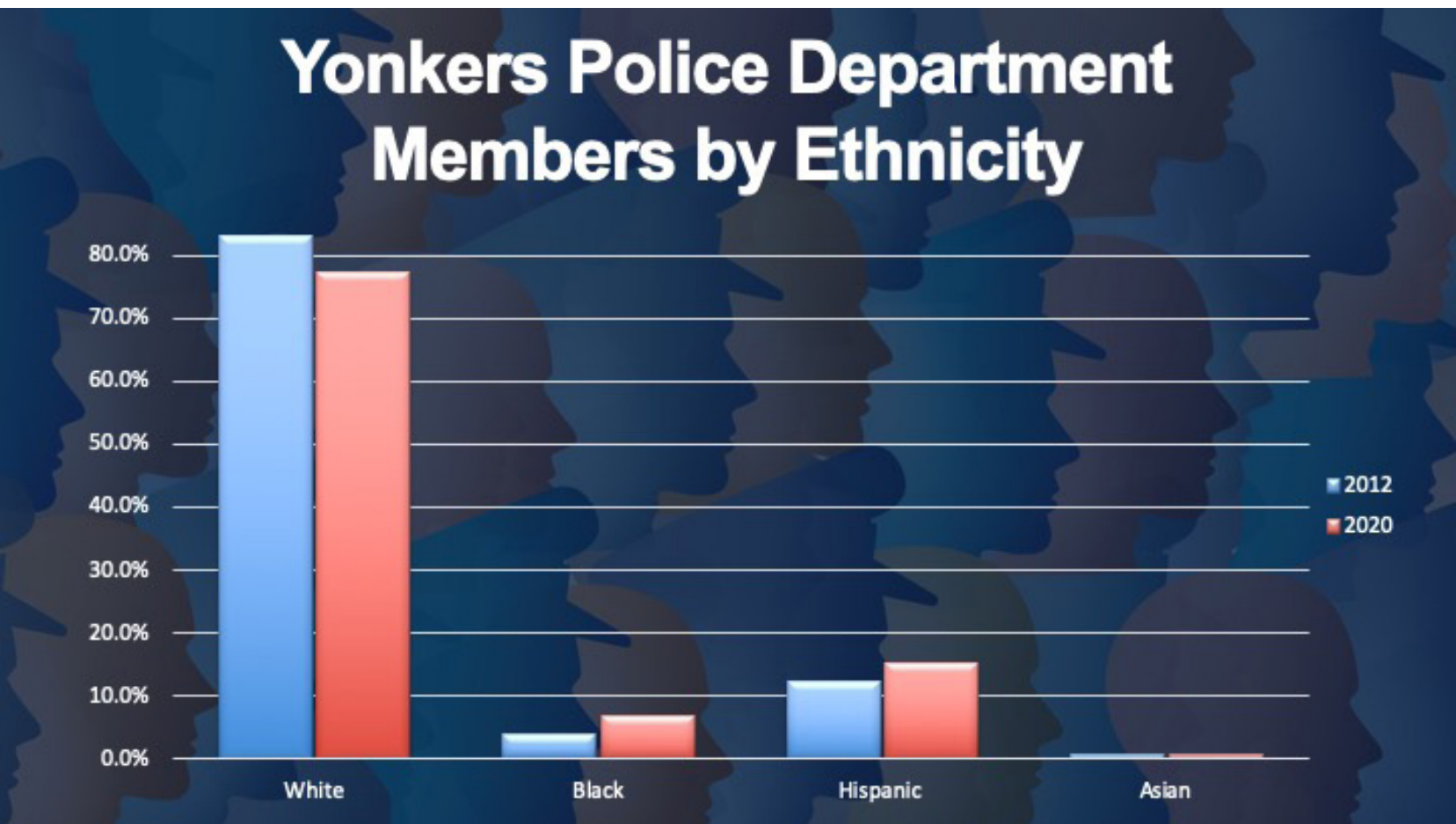
The YPRC found certain practices and policies of the PPSRC may require additional review and change. The Committee was informed that some PPSRC members have served beyond the stated two-year limit, and at least one member was found to have not met the residency requirement to serve. These issues should be immediately addressed. Furthermore, the YPRC recommends YPD publicize civilian openings on the PPSRC and provide the public with semi-annual reporting on PPSRC activities.

The YPRC recognizes that the Yonkers City Council is currently considering legislation to establish a Civilian Complaint Review Board ("CCRB") that would consist of 15 residents who would have the power to receive, investigate, hear, make findings and recommend actions for complaints by the public against members of the Police Department for instances that include excessive force, abuse of authority and offensive language. This model is similar to that of the PPSRC. The main difference is that the proposed CCRB would be entirely represented by civilians rather than a mix of police and civilians selected by YPD. The YPRC sees merit in utilizing a CCRB model with greater civilian involvement. However, members also expressed concern over the absence of law enforcement representation on the proposed CCRB and the possible negative impacts of publicizing accusations against officers that may be unfounded. It may be most effective to incorporate the functions of the proposed CCRB into the existing PPSRC structure. The City of Yonkers should carefully examine the existing PPSRC and proposed CCRB, as well as oversight bodies in other cities, in establishing a model that best provides for effective citizen oversight over cases of police misconduct.



IV. RECRUITING AND SUPPORTING EXCELLENT PERSONNEL

The recent nationwide calls for social justice that followed several highly publicized police-involved civilian deaths have shined a light on the disparity that exists between the demographics of many law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. The Yonkers Police Department consists of around 620 police personnel, including 473 Officers, 67 Sergeants, 42 Lieutenants and 19 Captains. In comparison to the City's population, which breaks down to about 52 percent White, 38 percent Hispanic and 20 percent African American, the YPD workforce is approximately 78 percent White, 14 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent African American. Low minority representation extends to the higher ranks of the YPD. Of the Department's 128 Captains, Lieutenants and Sergeants, 8 are Hispanic and 3 are African American.



The YPRC therefore focused on the current strategies, policies and procedures utilized by the YPD for recruitment, hiring and retention, and recommended specific actions to help achieve a workforce that more accurately reflects the diversity of Yonkers. The YPRC also considered police officer wellness and the importance of recognizing and responding to the health needs of officers so that they can best fulfill their responsibilities in protecting public safety.

FOCUS AREA #7: RECRUITING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

The City of Yonkers has been actively working to achieve a more diverse police workforce. Over the last eight years, it has made progress in increasing the number of African American and Hispanic officers within the Department. The YPRC reviewed demographic data from police officer candidates who took the 2017 YPD Entrance Examination and found that 43.3 percent of the 2,425 resident candidates self-reported as Hispanic. The demographic data from the 2017 examination, however, also showed that just 12 percent were African American.

Increasing the number of Hispanic and African American police officers within YPD, including its leadership, is a central focus area for the YPRC and several issues were identified, primarily relating to the hiring process and recruitment, which brought about the reform recommendations discussed below.

YPRC Recommendations

4.1 Expand NYS Civil Service Banding Zones for Police Entrance Examination Scores

Police Entrance Examinations are scored in accordance with New York State Civil Service Law, Section 61.1, often referred to as Band Zone Scoring. Candidates who take the exam are placed into a banding zone based on their score:

Zone 1 (100) = score 100 (perfect)

Zone 2 (95) = scores 95-99

Zone 3 (90) = scores 90-94

Zone 4 (85) = scores 85-89

Zone 5 (80) = scores 80-84

Zone 6 (75) = scores 75-79

Zone 7 (70) = scores 70-74

The list of candidates is sent by the State to the Yonkers Civil Service Commission and established for four years, during which time the YPD may request to make appointments for hire beginning with candidates from Zone 1 and working down until all zones are exhausted or until the list expires. It's important to note that a new zone cannot be reached until only two candidates remain in the preceding zone. For the 2017 exam, YPD to date has hired up to Zone 3, but with over 100 candidates remaining in this zone, it is unlikely that Zone 3 will be exhausted before the list expires in 2021. YPD has not reached Zone 4 since the 2009 exam period.

The current banding zone policy ensures that those who score among the highest on the written exam will be among the first selected for further consideration in the hiring process. While sensible in theory, the YPRC widely agreed that securing a high score on the written examination does not assure the effectiveness or success of a candidate as a police officer and may not be the best indicator of a candidate's qualification for further evaluation in the hiring process. Limiting YPD's selection of candidates to the highest band scoring zones and requiring each zone to be exhausted before moving to the next makes it very difficult for YPD to select a diverse class of officers during the four years allowed before the list expires. The narrow zones establish a relatively small pool of candidates that YPD may choose while excluding a considerable portion of potentially more qualified candidates. According to the reporting data, African American candidates accounted for just 12 percent of total police officer candidates in 2017.

To achieve an accurate representation of the City's African American population of 20 percent within the YPD, the Department will need 120 African American officers in the workforce, an increase of 78 officers from the current level. In the last five exam cycles, the YPD has averaged 7.2 African American hires per four-year cycle. At this rate, and accounting for retirements, it is very unlikely that this goal can be achieved in the next several decades.

To provide for a larger, more diverse pool of qualified candidates, the YPRC recommends a change to New York State Civil Service law enabling local police departments to establish an expanded band scoring zone of 85-100 from which police officer candidates may be selected for further evaluation. This would dramatically increase the number of candidates that could be considered for hiring and deliver more diverse classes of police officers in a shorter period of time.

4.2 Strengthen Residency Requirement for Police Officer Candidates

The current residency requirement requires Yonkers police officer candidates to be legal residents of Westchester, Nassau, Putnam, Rockland, or Bronx County for at least three months immediately preceding the date of the written examination and continuously up to and including the date of appointment. Data from the 2017 YPD Entrance Examination shows that about half of the 5,000 candidates who took the exam were not Yonkers residents, which demonstrates the high regional interest in joining YPD and the competitiveness of the examination. The way the current residency requirement is structured it appears to allow for non-residents an equal opportunity to join YPD as those who are residents. However, YPD prioritizes the selection of candidates from its Yonkers Resident List, and due to the large number of Yonkers candidates who score 90 or above, rarely is a non-resident selected for hire. An identified concern for the YPRC is the short term residency requirement under the current policy, which may contribute to a larger pool of candidates who do not have a significant amount of familiarity with Yonkers communities.

The YPRC recommends that the City of Yonkers consider options for extending the period of time that a police officer candidate must be a Yonkers resident, both prior to taking the written exam and post-hiring. Hiring more officers who were raised in Yonkers or who have lived in Yonkers for several years may help strengthen the connection between police officers and the communities they serve.

4.3 Award Points on Police Exam for Long-Term Residency and Underrepresented Populations

Increasing diversity within the YPD workforce is among the most important areas of focus for the YPRC. The YPRC has concluded that establishing practices that further support local hiring may also support future efforts to recruit a more diverse class of officers. Future classes of officers may be more likely to become interested in a career in law enforcement by seeing others in their community joining the Department.

As a mechanism to boost efforts for achieving a workforce that is representative of the diversity of Yonkers' population, the City should consider seeking authorization from the New York State Civil Service Commission to allocate additional points on the written examination for candidates who attended Yonkers Public Schools and/or to those who are of an underrepresented population within the YPD workforce, such as African Americans.

4.4 Establish a Police Examination Preparation Course in Yonkers High Schools

Preparation classes are currently available for those who have applied to take the police examination; however this support only assists those already interested in joining the YPD. Achieving a qualified, diverse police workforce that is representative of the City's communities requires a greater level of engagement with Yonkers youth who may never have considered a career in law enforcement and who may be unaware or intimidated by the steps required to become a police officer. Providing a police examination preparation course for high school students will help students gain information and familiarity with the police examination and increase their confidence and comfort with taking the test.

4.5 Develop a Long Term Police Recruitment Strategy for the Black Community

As previously noted, demographic data from candidates who took the police examination in 2017 shows that only 12 percent self-reported as being Black. The YPRC is concerned that such a low percentage of Black applicants will not support a police force that is representative of the 20 percent of Yonkers residents who are Black. In comparison, 43 percent of 2017 police examination applicants were Hispanic, which is 5 percent higher than the City's overall Hispanic population of 38 percent.

The YPRC considered several factors that may contribute to low interest among Black residents in joining the Yonkers Police Department, including the poor perception of police and ineffective marketing and outreach by YPD. The development and implementation of a long-term police recruitment strategy to increase the pool of Black police officer candidates is critically important to achieve a diverse police workforce and help build trust between the Black community and the police. The YPRC recommends that YPD work to gain buy-in from Black officers in assisting with recruitment efforts through daily contact and conversation with Black youth and young adults about joining YPD.

Recognizing that low diversity within police departments is a problem that extends to cities across New York State and throughout the country, the YPRC also recommends the establishment of State and/or Federal police diversity recruitment programs that serve to fund marketing and community outreach activities targeting underrepresented populations within local police departments.

FOCUS AREA #8: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR POLICE

The Yonkers Police Department currently has a dedicated Members Assistance Program (MAP) Coordinator who serves as an internal Employee Assistance Professional and helps to ensure its members' health and safety. MAP addresses the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health and wellness of the membership and their families. MAP coordinates critical incident debriefings, facilitates group and individual crisis interventions, and responds to the scenes of major incidents to serve as a resource for the officers involved and to ensure the health and healing of each member impacted.

The mental health and wellness of the men and women who serve as police officers is critical to their effectiveness in serving the community. Police officers are subjected to some of the most challenging situations in our society, and the YPRC believes that if our communities expect a police force that is responsive to its needs, the community must be responsive to the health and well-being of its police. Mental health and wellness is an area of interest impacting police officers in departments across the country, State and Federal resources must be made available to local law enforcement agencies to adequately provide for police mental health and wellness programs such as those described in the following recommendations.

YPRC Recommendations

4.6 Mental Health Support for Police

The YPRC recommends YPD utilize the resources of an established Mental Health Crisis Team, as discussed in Recommendation 1.1 and ensure intergovernmental coordination for additional services as may be required.

4.7 Engage and Train Officers in Mental Health Intervention

YPD leadership should seek input from officers on the issues of greatest concern to their mental and physical health and their ability to perform their job functions. Proactively communicating directly with officers on various situations and incidents they're experiencing can help inform the Department on possible mental health risks and ensure appropriate intervention measures are employed. YPD should explore mental health and wellness training opportunities for supervisors to gain strategies and techniques for recognizing warning signs and applying effective intervention. This training may also be beneficial to officers in providing them a better understanding of mental health issues and tools to utilize in their daily interactions with the public.

CONCLUSION

This collaborative exercise of the City of Yonkers and the Yonkers Police Reform Committee has resulted in recommendations that will help strengthen trust and respect between police and Yonkers' diverse communities. The process of developing recommendations also initiated a productive, open dialogue about the issues most important to community stakeholders and a greater understanding of policing challenges. It is critical that the completion of this plan initiates the beginning of continued dialogue between the City and the YPRC on the implementation of the measures recommended.

There were also many issues raised by members during the weekly YPRC meetings that involved issues that fell beyond the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative's scope. Therefore, the conversation that follows the submission of this plan must be expanded to acknowledge that the issues involving trust and respect between police and communities are most often symptoms of the underlying root causes of injustice that continue to disproportionately affect communities of color. We cannot resolve the issues concerning policing within our cities, and claim 'mission accomplished' while those of chronic poverty, educational inequity, environmental justice, and other systemic inequalities remain unaddressed. The City of Yonkers is committed to continuing to engage its communities and work collaboratively with its County, State and Federal partners to enact the structural reforms necessary to overcome injustice.

The YPRC extends its gratitude to Governor Andrew Cuomo for his statewide action to reinvent law enforcement for the 21st Century, and to Mayor Mike Spano and the Yonkers City Council for their leadership and dedication of resources to ensure this important initiative was effectively accomplished while simultaneously providing for the safety of committee members during the COVID-19 pandemic. The YPRC also extends its sincere appreciation to the Yonkers Police Department for its openness and partnership throughout this process. While areas of reform were identified, overall, the Yonkers Police Department does an outstanding job in providing for public safety and community engagement. The YPRC found that many reform measures being called for in other cities around the country have already been addressed in Yonkers or are currently being implemented. The members of the YPRC thank all the men and women of the YPD for their service.

"It's important for us not to let ourselves off the hook and think this is just a police problem, because those shootings, that devaluation of life is part and parcel with a legacy of discrimination, and Jim Crow, and segregation that we're all responsible for. And if we're going to actually put an end to racial bias in the criminal justice system, then we're going to have to work on doing something about racial bias in corporate America and bias in where people can buy homes. That is a larger project in which all of us can take some responsibility. We can all do better on this front than we've been doing."

– **President Barack Obama**¹.

¹<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/barack-obama-60-minutes-interview-trump>



ADDENDUM

All public comments included in the “Addendum” are verbatim quotes. The comments were not revised to correct spelling, grammar, etc. It should be noted that the public comments do not necessarily reflect the views of the Yonkers Police Reform Committee.

Comments on Police Reform:

1. **John M.**, Yonkers – With all due Respect, the number 1 thing to really have Police Reform, is first too ACKNOWLEDGE their is a “CODE OF SILENCE KNOWN AS THE BLUE WALL” and until we can change this behavior, their will never be Real Change. Officers have to be able to speak the truth without RETALIATION. Then the Community will open up to the same CHANGE. JUST ONE MANS OPINION.
2. **Sue M.**, Yonkers –To the Yonkers people on the Yonkers Police Reform Committee-THANK YOU for being so openminded, thorough, and comprehensive in your recommendations. You took your responsibility seriously and thank you for this report, and your commitment to continuing the conversation, with the residents, the City Council, and Westchester County. Unfortunately, one of our public comment hearings was cancelled due to snow, but these are the areas I would have brought up then, and are still relevant today as we move forward. It makes sense to me to have a COUNTY WIDE set of policing principles. I would like to see a civilian oversight board, perhaps county wide, with community participation and real accountability. We cannot expect the police to solve societal issues like homelessness, poverty, and drug addiction, but neither are they trained to treat people as “humanely” as we would like. #1 in the report is SO IMPORTANT, AND THIS SHOULD BE COUNTY WIDE....AND MOST IMPORTANT....to me is the findings of the committee that Crime in Yonkers is DOWN...AND THAT IS GREAT NEWS.... so accordingly the YPD needs to allocate their resources judiciously, and there can NOT be an increase in the budget for police. We need to follow state civil service guidelines and make use of attrition, as people retire, and utilize preferred hiring for members of the city. We need to utilize many types of organizations that could enhance our public safety, including community groups dedicated to mediation, civil rights and justice. I understand the important role police play in society, and I will respect them, if it is mutual, and the climate of fear and intimidation used now ceases. No one is above the law, and police need to be accountable to the public they serve. I attended the first 2 public hearings on this matter, and as a white person I must say I was completely taken aback at story after story of police “abuse” and racial targeting. These were all testimony from people of color, who were speaking from their hearts. I’m glad the committee REALLY LISTENED to these neighbors and I look forward to seeing some changes soon.
3. **Sara K.**, Yonkers – I want to commend The Police Reform Committee for the excellent work they have done developing this report. From where I sit the most important provision is developing a Mental Health Professional Group which can respond to 911 calls when the problem is just that, mental health. In conjunction with that, training the 911 operators in this new methodology and informing the public is crucial. I am also happy to see the initiatives to address mental health concerns of police officers, to reach out to the community and to recruit from the African American population. It is critical that instances of abuse and discrimination be quickly and easily reported by those victimized. These incidents need to be investigated quickly. I was pleased to see that when an officer is found guilty, the disciplinary action will be available to the public on a website. That transparency is important. I would go a step further and have a Civilian Review Board involved. Such a board would bring a greater level of impartiality. It is very important that police officers be held accountable for their abusive/discriminatory behavior and that this accountability is seen by the public. I would also like to see a follow-up report by the Yonkers Police Department /Police Reform Committee one year after these suggestions are implemented. This report should be publicized and made available to the community. Comments should be solicited. Based on the report and comments, new initiatives and/or modifications should be adopted. This Program should continued to be followed and reported on every year in the same way, so that we can see our progress and work to improve those areas that are lacking. Thank you again to all who worked on this report.
4. **Jerry L.**, Yonkers –Stephen Covey, author of the book The Seven Habits of Very Effective People included, as one of those effective habits, “Begin with the end in mind.” Reflective of that statement

I quote the first sentence of the conclusion of the draft plan. "This collaborative exercise of the City of YONKERS and Yonkers Police Reform Committee has resulted in recommendations that will help strengthen trust and respect between police and Yonkers' diverse communities." This is an opinion and should not be stated as fact unless of course the person stating this opinion has a reliable crystal ball. The whole purpose of public input is to give feedback regarding those strategies which may or may not result in improved policing effectiveness coupled with improved police/ community relations. I stress - a document as important as the Reform and Reinvention Plan Draft should not present opinion as fact. While reading this draft there are several phrases that kept coming to mind. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. The devil is in the details. The goal of bureaucracy is to expand bureaucracy. In addition, there was the definition of racism. "A belief or doctrine that inherent differences among various human racial groups determine cultural or individual treatment, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to dominate others or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others." I will attempt to keep my responses parallel to the order of the draft plan itself. On page 4 entry 1.1 reads, "Establish a mental health crisis outreach team and policy inclusive of trained professionals that can serve as the primary responders to calls that do not involve a legal issue or a threat of violence or a risk to the individual or others." This concept is further explained on the bottom of draft page 12. I believe that the absence of a police officer, - a non-uniformed officer, even in situations such as these could place the lives of the responding team at risk. The actions of individuals who are mentally deranged and or emotionally disturbed are not easily or reliably predicted. The interaction can degenerate quickly such that the lives of the responding team, the person in crisis, bystanders or the surrounding public are jeopardized. Even if team members were to take the lead, I believe that the presence of a non-uniformed but armed officer should be standard. I suggest a non-uniformed presence so as to decrease the possibility of perceived escalation within the situation. In the absence of a non-uniformed presence, I believe that it would be beneficial for responding members to be armed with concealed mace and a stun gun - non-lethal means - by which if the situation spiraled out of control, they could incapacitate the menacing person, exit the situation and immediately request back-up without loss of life. Furthermore, on this same page there is entry 1.5 which begins, "Keep police presence in schools limited to student engagement opportunities..." This position is further explained on the bottom of draft page 15. I am in disagreement with this statement. Depending upon the threats to the safety of the learning environment either by students themselves and/or intrusive individuals, the presence of uniformed officers MAY be necessary. If the actions of an individual student and/or a gang of students are so violent and/or so destructive of the learning environment then the intervention of a uniformed officer(s) may become necessary. Furthermore, in the event of intrusive individuals such as irate parents bent on inflicting harm and/ or non-school adolescents seeking to gain entry and inflict harm - then a uniform presence is crucial. The bottom line is that a uniformed presence whether consistent or on an as needed basis should NEVER be taken off the table. On draft page 13 there appears the subheading focus area#2: improve communication between caller, dispatch and police. Although in most cases when I have called in situations the respondents have been courteous and professional there have been some notable exceptions. On a couple of situations, I was ridiculed by the respondents because of my lack of sufficient detail. Needless to say, my reaction to trying to do the right thing and then being ridiculed was less than pleasant and left a very negative impression upon me. If I did not believe in the YPD, my perception of the YPD would have been irreparably damaged. Furthermore, there have been several occasions when driving on the Bronx River Parkway where vehicles were being extremely recklessly driven. I attempted to call 911 which directed my call to Yonkers Police, only to be told that the call would have to be diverted to the Westchester County Police. When I asked if the respondent could connect the call, the answer was NO. - VERY FRUSTRATING! On another occasion, I witnessed an extremely reckless driver exiting the Bronx River Parkway, at exit 10 B. When I attempted to call in this information, I was told there was no exit 10 B.

Obviously, it is crucial that respondents be professional, courteous and be aware of the exits that exist on the parkways and highways that traverse our city. Further down on draft page 13 there appears the YPRC recommendation – 1.3 - establish and raise public awareness of best practices for calling 911. Every year I request a hard copy of the garbage collection schedule. Combined with the schedule itself is other useful information. Perhaps, this publication could serve as a vehicle to raise public awareness regarding 911 best practices. On draft page 16 topic 2.1 there appears the YPRC recommendation - develop a comprehensive community policing strategic plan. While in theory such a plan makes perfect sense when I read this entire recommendation I felt that this was bureaucracy trying to extend bureaucracy. - I felt that within the context of the present YPD this proposed plan represented a duplication of effort which would usurp much time, energy and manpower from the provision of direct servicing to the city. My reaction to this recommendation was that it represented "Bureaucracy gone wild. ". Further down on draft page 16 there is the recommendation 2.3 which reads - consistency in community outreach patrols. I am in complete agreement with the content of this recommendation. Officers who are familiar with the people and businesses of a community, who are familiar with the personal dynamics of a community and who are a "boots on the ground" presence are an invaluable asset. However, I ask a question - rather than adding more police officers, at a significant cost of the city, wouldn't it be more cost effective to re-distribute existing personnel for this task? On this same page there is YPRC recommendation 2.4 regarding investing in marketing for community affairs programs. This recommendation includes the wording, "while existing city resources may be utilized... " My position is that the city resources MUST be utilized and save the \$200,000 annual cost of a professional marketing campaign. I believe the goal should always be to get maximum bang out of every buck and I would view this as a misguided expenditure. On draft page 17 appears YPRC recommendation 2.6 -reporting discriminative stops and searches. If sufficient protocols were not already in place then I would concur with the need for such a website. However, if you turn to draft page 18 paragraph four underneath focus area #6 -citizen oversight, accountability, and transparency - There appears the following "...YPD provides for several methods of filing complaints against the department, including in person complaints at any police or internal affairs facility or by mail, phone or fax. The complaint form is available in English and Spanish on the YPD's website and maybe filed anonymously. " I believe that the creation of an additional website is another example of bureaucracy gone wild and represents unnecessary, time-consuming and costly duplication. On the same page and underneath this same focus area appears the following. "Records of citizen complaint forms received indicate a low level of community complaints against YPD officers. Outcomes of investigations into citizen complaints are generally reported to the complainant.... however (Proceed to YPRC 3.1 on draft page 19.....One of the key concerns for the YPRC is the lack of publicity and accessibility to police policies, complaints against officers, and the handling of disciplinary actions addressing officer misconduct. The Yonkers Police Department does not currently publicize its internal policies and procedures." My response to this recommendation is as follows - so you have a department which clearly is operating in the best interest of the community and therefore you should not, once again, saddle them with more bureaucratic procedures which consume time, energy, manpower and divert resources from direct servicing to bureaucratic filings. In addition, internal policies and procedures should remain internal. The purpose is to facilitate communication and protocols among trained, dedicated police professionals and not be misinterpreted and/or misused antagonistically by non-department personnel. I must admit that I am somewhat confused by YPRCU recommendation 3.1, especially if you go down to contact under YPRC recommendation 3.3 which reads as follows, "the police professional standards review committee, comprised of civilians and sworn personnel, has been established to provide the community the opportunity to review internal investigations." It appears to me that the opportunity to review necessary material is already and firmly in place. Furthermore, the YPRC recommendation that YPD, " provide the public with semi annual reporting on PPSIC activities" appears to me yet another example of bureaucracy

trying to further extend bureaucracy at the cost of direct service. One of my areas of strongest agreement with YPRC appears on draft page 20. I believe that a proposed CCBB composed entirely by civilians rather than a mix of police and civilians is wrong thinking and misguided. Although the proposed 15 residents would have the power to receive, investigate, hear, make findings, and recommend actions for complaints by the public against members of the YPD I fail to see how they would have the necessary background, knowledge and insight to effectively and fairly use the powers they would be granted. I believe that the confluence of ignorance by a completely civilian board and the possibility of being manipulated would be extremely detrimental to our city and therefore should not be implemented. The area of my strongest disagreement is in regard to focus area #7 : recruiting a diverse workforce which appears on draft pages 22 through 24. Prior to expressing my disagreement with the majority of this focused area I would like to first express my complete agreement with section 4.4 - establish a police examination preparation course in Yonkers High Schools. I wholeheartedly endorse such preparation. It would serve as a vehicle to offer valuable career awareness as well as give highly beneficial insight into the workings of law-enforcement. Ideally it would provide the participants with an appreciation of the efforts, difficulties and triumphs which can be part of a life in law enforcement and engender an awareness, first and foremost, that police are fellow human beings who choose to take on demanding but absolutely essential responsibilities in society. My support for such a course is 100%. However, apart from this one recommendation, I must express my basic disagreement with many of the YPRC recommendations within this focus area. At the beginning of my feedback, I made reference to a definition of racism – “A doctrine that inherent differences among the various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one’s own race is superior and has the right to dominate others or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others. “. A related question that I pose is, when is so-called anti-racism the virulent, demeaning, degrading, insulting essence of racism itself? If an identity group were targeted for insult and demeaning abuse regarding lack of intelligence that would be deplorable! However, if it is asserted that the only way a particular identity group would gain access to a field of employment were if overall standards were lowered and the scores of this targeted group were artificially inflated then what is the message? Would these “accommodations” speak to equality of intellectual prowess or just the opposite? On draft page 22, YPRC recommendation 4.1 - Expand NYS civil service banding zones for police entrance examination scores, we see a recommendation that in practicality would lower the standards for selection to be a candidate for the Police Academy. The YPRC argues that, “...securing a high score on the written exam does not assure the effectiveness or success of a candidate as a police officer” but does a lower score result in a greater level of assurance? Is a lower score reflective of an increased potential of a perspective candidate? Furthermore, how many times have lawsuits been brought against civil service tests claiming they are not job related and therefore have to be totally reworked. However, that is not even the argument being forwarded here. It is a question of disparate numbers. Regardless of test validity, if the sought number of passing test candidates is not achieved, then the scores should be distorted and contorted so as to change the outcome. After all, numbers don’t care what you do with them? Right? - WRONG! Continuing, in YPRC Recommendation 4.3 - Award points on police exam for long/ term residency and underrepresented populations - We see a strategy to inflate scores as per the race of the candidate as otherwise it would appear that there is little confidence the candidate will make the grade. Would this institutionalized perception of reduced ability be considered racist? In addition, the strengthening of residency requirements and awarding points on police exam for long-term residency are reflected in recommendations 4.2 and 4.3 on page 23 of the draft. Very often when seeking to find candidates for the highest of positions the concept of casting a “wide net” is implemented. It is felt that the wider the “net” the greater the likelihood of getting the most qualified candidate for the specific position. If the “net” is reduced, in this case the geographic area from which candidates can apply and be appointed, are you then fielding the most qualified

candidates to handle the difficult and demanding responsibilities inherent in law enforcement? After all is said and done, the most basic and primary question of any police reinvention should ALWAYS be - Will the proposed changes make our city safer? If proposed changes do NOT pass this essential test then they are counterproductive to public safety and should not be implemented. It would be beneficial to remember that a diverse workforce is not, in and of itself, a solution to all problems and has been shown to be of limited value. I refer to the research report entitled An Evidence-Assessment of the RECOMMENDATIONS of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, page 15, included in paragraphs 3 and 4: "It is unclear whether additional diversity in police agencies on its own will change the nature of citizen - police interactions or improve citizens' views of the police." "It is unclear whether police agencies perform better with regard to crime control or citizen satisfaction when their demographics match those of the service populations or when they become majority non-white agencies....Some studies find that the inclusion of more racial or ethnic minorities can actually increase crime rates and police-caused homicides, others find that the diverse hiring practices have no impact on crime rates...In conclusion, after all is said and done, every resident in every identity group needs and deserves to be safe and feel safe within their own specific community and our city at large. ALL else is secondary. As per page 5, paragraph two of the New York State Police Reform And Reinvention Collaborative Resources & Guide For Public Officials And Citizens: "Government must ensure residents' sense of personal security in order for communities to thrive and prosper. On page 114 of the New York State police reform and reinvention collaborative -resources and guide for public officials and citizens - It states the following - phase 4: public comment and ratification (January -March 2021). You would think that since the draft was made available to the public only several days ago that the public would be given a fair and reasonable amount of time to carefully read and analyze this important document. Although the draft plan itself contains no particular date by which public input/response is to be made to the draft, the Mayor's Newsletter which I received as an email on Friday, February 26th lists a date of March 2nd as the date by which this public input is to be made. RIDICULOUS! This deadline is a functional definition of the BUMS' RUSH. - Present a substantial document for review and then give the public precious little time to conduct a review so that the document can then be approved and sent before substantial public review has been received and entered into the record. UNACCEPTABLE! As per page 115 of the aforementioned Resources and Guide, has the public been sufficiently educated regarding this draft? I, for one, don't think so. Furthermore under the title - revise the plan to incorporate public comment: appears the following, " Consider how you will address those comments which are not adopted and those that highlight areas of tension and disagreement among members of the community..."Is this March 2nd deadline an attempt to undermine the expression of "areas of tension and disagreements among members of the community". At the very least, I would hope that an additional week would be provided for public input pertaining to the Draft Plan. I believe that the public at large is deserving of this additional time. The public at large is ill-served with a BUMS' RUSH. I await your timely response to this request for additional time to be provided for public scrutiny and feedback of the Draft in question.

5. **Nancy V.**, Yonkers – I just finished reading the police reform committee report and recommendations. I'm pleased to see that mental health is highlighted with great importance. Implementing a mobile crisis team; providing adequate de-escalation training as well as educating the residents on how to obtain help when a family member is having a mental breakdown will significantly make a change in policing our communities. Thanks again for listening to me. As a resident of Yonkers for 27__ years and recently attended public forum regarding police relations and practices in my community, I want to express my interest in staying informed of your discussions, recommendations, and actions taken at your meetings. I'm asking that you provide me copies the Agenda and Minutes. My interest and concern are sparked by the political and cultural events we all experienced this summer. I feel your Committee can benefit from my experience as a Social Worker for many years, and the parent of

victim of excessive police force. Thank you for your consideration and may this exchange be of mutual benefit.

6. **Michael H.**, Yonkers – While I personally have had good experiences with the YPD it is clear that others in the community have not and thus I submit the above comments in the spirit of collaboration:
 - a) Examine establishing a COUNTY WIDE set of policing principles;
 - b) Examine establishing a COUNTY WIDE civilian oversight board with community participation and meaningful accountability mechanisms;
 - c) Utilization of alternative organizations to mediate disputes and enhance public safety;
 - d) Examine mechanisms for preferential hiring of City and County residents into YPD vacancies as they arise.
7. **Desiree D.**, Yonkers – On page 43 when the number of complaints are referenced, it should include the number of complaints made in 2020 as well. Thank you!
8. **Athena D.**, Tuckahoe – As a former Social Worker (10 years), volunteering for the past 30 years and having studied Psychology, since the age of 14, those who have chosen to become police officers must be EMPATHETIC, COMPASSIONATE and educate themselves about the communities they serve! ALL police officers all over the world NEED to have specialized training in how to deal with people with mental illness and disabilities; IT IS A MUST!!
9. **George M.**, Yonkers – Thank you to all the Yonkers Taskforce Members for your due diligence towards this ongoing community conversation. It seems to me there needs to be a Westchester County-wide document published. I couldn't find a copy of the Yonkers Patrol Guide not on the web site. There needs to be more Oversight of community policing and a Civilian Review of County-wide policing issues. It would be good for Officers to know, where they come up short. Retraining and penalties need to be recorded and kept in personnel files. Recommendations need to be ongoing, as well as the reform conversation. How many times, if at all, has the ABLE Active Bystander Law Enforcement been employed. Is there a public record for ABLE? Even without individual officers named, it would be helpful to know if this program has any value to our community. What is the Chain of Command on the scene of incidents? Are superior officers requested or do they automatically respond to the scene? Then who is accountable at the scene? Once any criminality has been eliminated in traffic accidents, Wouldn't it be possible to save \$ and use an accident investigator, not an armed police officer. Likewise traffic control for utility or road repair workers needn't be armed police officers. During the first 2 Taskforce hearings, citizens spoke openly of their appalling interactions with YPD. While I haven't witnessed any of these confrontations personally, those descriptions are extremely disturbing to our family here in Yonkers. I wish to share the following thoughts with the Taskforce. It seems too many times "crime" is used to justify mistreatment of local folks. I think we need to pay attention to community assets, one being our youth. They need nurturing and quality education. They need forgiveness and "restorative justice". I know some of this has been initiated but it truly needs expansion. We need more local hiring of Yonkers residents and a commitment that they reside in the City of Yonkers for a minimum of 5 years, post appointment to YPD. The hiring plan should endeavor to have a YPD that looks more like the community it serves & protects! We need improved transparency and accountability.
10. **Kirsten A.**, Yonkers – In Dallas, Texas and. Colorado Springs, Colorado there are special units set up to handle mental health calls to 911. The units are run by a social worker and include paramedics. When a person calls 911 with a mental health issue, a licensed person decides whether to refer the call to the special unit. Studies show this has worked out well in both cities, reducing both arrests and hospitalizations, while preserving police resources.
I would like to see this model applied in Yonkers and, indeed, on all of Westchester County.

Thank you for accepting my input.

11. **Robert G.**, Yonkers – Due to the Supreme Court Olmstead Decision (1999), these changes will not suffice for the following reasons:

- 1 - Cooperation will need to be achieved at the Westchester Office of Mental Health, SPOA, Single Point Access, for the enforcement of valid oversight of assignment to housing contractors that genuinely respond to the needs and concerns of existing tenants of available vacancies. Managerial oversight of assisted individuals in these vacancies has been extensively missing by overzealous landlords for profiteering goals. There is evidence of weaponizing these programs by ignoring high rates of recidivism by assisted individuals to harass rent-controlled and rent-stabilized tenants. Without SPOA and associated contractors due diligence in responding legitimately to tenant habitability issues by the public, there will always be conflict and law enforcement accountability issues.
- 2 - There must be a specific unit of YPD that interfaces with some form of tenant advocacy to keep the unit up to date with activity in the common areas of apartment building housing. YPD nor landlords are specifically, legally responsible for illegal activity in this regard, as these common building areas are not visible from the street level. There is no oversight on the part of landlords to legally maintain the safety of their tenant constituency from these common, public areas. There are complex legal issues pursuant to apartment housing tenants to provide their own surveillance and protection. This obvious omission allows unusual activities to take place as it doesn't seem feasible to have a YPD force with the personnel to protect these types of environments. It has been shown that there has been an increase in this type of activity in landlords that have high participation in the SPOA placement administrative effort. Only the agencies that request SPOA placement have a true handle on the history of it's applicants.
- 3 - Landlord Oversight and Compliance:
 - a) Please include a verifiable landlord oversight and compliance activity in the Mental Health Crisis Outreach Team and Policy inclusive of trained professionals that could serve as the primary responders to calls that do not involve a legal issue or high threat of violence or risk to the individual or others.
 - b) Improve the functions of the Police Professional Standards Review Committee ("PPSRC") to ensure adequate community representation and reporting of Committee activities by including the impact and accountability of landlords. The YPRC also suggests the City consider incorporating the functions of the proposed Civilian Complaint Review Board ("CCRB") into the existing PPSRC structure. But it really needs to consider the impact of profiteering and accountability on the part of landlords who are using programs to bring at risk and supportive individuals into the community without any accountability to negative habitability. It has been shown landlords will ignore support-assisted tenant behavior in favor of revenue enhancement and additional profits created from lack of marketing costs.

In order for these measures to work, without additional costs to the city and YPD, there MUST be more extensive cooperation between the Westchester County Office of Mental Health, SPOA, Single Point of Access, and the proposed reform agencies. Otherwise there will never be any transparency into their internal compliance and oversight requirements of agencies they service. The agencies SPOA services connect them to landlords with vacancies whose oversight ONLY these agencies understand and can enforce. This conundrum of allows landlords to prosper without due diligence to anyone in particular but their investors. The County must enforce accountability on their part and transparency into SPOA community habitability compliance, if any. At this point in time, there is none.

12. **Karen O.**, Yonkers – I read Reform Committe Report.. I want to focus on the following areas. Item # 1 I would say you should add the Mental Health worker to Police team. #4 While it is important for 911 Operator to get special training what is going to be done to make sure that information is

being given to the officers handling the call. #6 This sound like each community would have a say in what their community policing model looks like. Item #10 Many community have tried this and it has been successful. Should send someone from the department to get idea from officer in the National Citizens' Alumni Association. #13 We should make the misdeeds of a police officer known to the States or Federal Registry. #17 Great idea. #18 I don't know whether I agree with that. There is a big difference between giving points for military service but residency?. #22 Excellent idea!!

13. **Deena B.**, New Orleans – It is excellent that the needs of the mentally ill are being addressed, often overlooked. It is forward thinking to have trained professionals answering calls, who have some training and understanding of what they are dealing and can respond with compassion.
14. **Julie W.**, Yonkers – The Yonkers Police Reform Committee (YPRC) has done excellent work collecting information from the community and the YPD concerning important policing issues, and has proposed a number of potentially useful solutions. We support their serious efforts to analyze the functions of the YPD and its interactions with the community and social service agencies, and their proposals based on the factors they identified.

Concerned Families of Westchester would like to propose two areas for further exploration: digital data collection; and the YPRC's own potential to influence the social policies that continue to determine the nature of policing, and that provide a rationale for continued militarization of the police - leading to increasing police shares of cities', states' and federal budgets.

Needed: Review of Electronic Data Collection Policies and Practices

In order to protect the rights and liberties of citizens, we need to know what digital data is being collected, how it is being used by the YPD, where, how and for how long it is being stored, and whether or not its use is consistent with Constitutional guarantees of freedom of association, freedom of speech and the right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures. Concerned Families of Westchester urges that the following questions be asked and answered:

1. What data about suspects do police have available to them in squad cars, and what are the sources of the data? To what degree is such information prejudicial? For example, if police are aware that someone being arrested for a current crime has a long police record, is the person being arrested just for the current crime, or because of their past interactions with the criminal justice system? Research has documented, and the obvious disproportionate outcomes have shown that the system is biased at all levels against Black and Hispanic populations. Is each case being treated as it emerges, or is it being treated as an in a long history of prior interactions?
2. The City of Yonkers Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative: Part I: YPD Information & Data, states on page 18, "The Yonkers Police Investigations Bureau is currently operating several Facial Recognition software platforms through New York State and Westchester County: HIDTA PIMS, Clearview AI, and Vigilant. Facial recognition software is limited to assisting in identifying suspects and perpetrators of crimes; the identification procedures must still be reviewed by a court as a matter of process. The Yonkers Police Department does not utilize Facial Recognition for any non-criminal investigation purposes, nor is facial recognition used solely for effecting arrest."

How were the facial recognition software platforms being now used chosen? Has the YPD conducted research on the reputations of HIDTA PIMS, Clearview AI, and Vigilant for accuracy or bias, reliability and honesty vs. corruption? What is the cost of these platforms?

Indeed, how can the YPD justify using facial recognition software at all, when Axon itself decided not to use it because of evidence it discriminates against people of color? <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/12/19/federal-study-confirms-racial-bias-many-facial-recognition-systems-casts-doubt-their-expanding-use/>

Given the known bias of AI facial-recognition software, we urge the YPRC to oppose the use of facial recognition software by the YPD for any purpose – especially in criminal cases where suspects' liberty is at stake. We question whether any use of facial-recognition software, give its

known inherent bias, can be considered “due process.”

3. Police Commissioner Mueller has in the past denied that any YPD digital data is stored on Evidence.com. However, Yonkers uses tasers manufactured by Axon, which stores data on Evidence.com, which is also used by the U.S. and several other country's military forces. We suggest further review, and request that a list be compiled of any data YPD enters into Evidence.com, or shares with government agencies that use Evidence.com, and any it receives from Evidence.com.
4. How much money does Yonkers pay monthly for the services of data storage or data compilation services, and what does YPD receive in exchange?
5. Are the tasers Yonkers police carry still set up to record video on every use of a taser? How many police carry tasers? How many will carry body cameras? What happens to the video recordings from each? Where is the data stored, and for how long?
6. At last summer's Black Lives Matter demonstrations, YPD drones were sighted overhead. Commissioner Mueller subsequently stated to interviewers that the YPD was developing a policy on drone use that would be shared only with the US Justice Department. (See <https://truthout.org/articles/police-drones-dont-just-watch-protests-they-record-them-with-little-oversight/> .) We urge the YPRC to request YPD transparency concerning its current policy for the use of drones, particularly at public gatherings. What data is collected, how long is it stored, and how much does it cost the city or the YPD right now? What can we expect it to cost in the future?
The ACLU has recommended, “A drone should be deployed by law enforcement only with a warrant, in an emergency, or when there are specific and articulable grounds to believe that the drone will collect evidence relating to a specific criminal act.” Did drone use at last summer's Black Lives Matter demonstration, and does current YPD drone policy, conform to this standard? We urge the YPRC to propose that the YPD adopt the ACLU position on drone deployment.
7. Part I, page 13, section 3, “Training and Equipment,” includes the statement, “YPD also owns specialty emergency response vehicles that are used for rescue operation and assistance, as well as surveillance equipment, including drones, used for investigative purposes. Equipment and vehicles described above are funded almost entirely through Federal Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) funding.” What other surveillance equipment does YPD own? In addition to drones, what other surveillance equipment, UASI-funded or otherwise, was deployed at the Black Lives Matter demonstrations last summer? What was done with any video or audio footage transmitted or collected? What guarantees can the YPD offer that none remains stored, and that no police records were kept of any individuals' lawful participation in this first-amendment-protected assembly, either on YPD, vendors' or government servers?
8. Is taser or drone video footage, and will body cam video footage, be entered into the Evidence.com or any other private, national database? Where is it stored? For how long is it or will it be stored? How can we have assurances that it is actually destroyed rather than shifted from one drive to another for future use by some private or governmental intelligence agency?

Needed: Review of Alternatives to Police Budget for Reducing Crime

We also note that about one in four participants on the YPRC panel were police department, police union, or police organization officials and leaders. We are concerned that this excessive police influence may have prevented any consideration of the Black Lives Matter demand to “defund the police” and transfer funds from the police budget to meet mental-health and social needs of Yonkers residents. The Yonkers t/y 2021 budget includes nearly \$108 million for the police department - by far the largest expenditure in the non-Board of Education portion of the city's budget. In contrast, the Parks Department gets \$14 million, the Library \$9.25 million. The police budget is 95 times the size of the Constituent Services budget (\$1.13 million). Together with the YPD Part I report that about half their 911 responses are “service calls,” we endorse the YPRC call for training 911 operators to make appropriate distinctions. We note that providing adequate well-trained personnel for these tasks must

be considered the highest priority, and may require shifting resources from the police department to expanded social service departments as civilian personnel take up, for example, some substantial share of police time currently devoted to patrolling among the homeless population or responding to 911 mental-health emergencies.

Needed: Review of Potential Influence on Social Policy

The report correctly mentions social problems the YPRC cannot solve alone. We note, however, our city's statistics on crime. In the three years reported in Part I on resources, crimes involving theft of property - larceny, grand larceny, robbery and burglary - accounted for two-thirds to three quarters of all crimes reported. Too many of our residents, as everyone knows, are desperately poor and jobless. It might be more cost effective for the city to be devoting seed money for grants that would give economically desperate people the money they need rather than spending millions of dollars on a military force, courts and lockups to punish a few for trying to grab resources from others. An increasing number of organizations are experimenting with giving cash payments to some of cities' poorest families. One research project suggests that even a slight reduction of economic desperation, to the tune of \$500 per month per family with no strings attached - \$6,000 per year for two years - helped parents find jobs and students succeed in school. It would be surprising if it didn't decrease property crime and domestic violence as well. So perhaps we could use salary funds from attrition in the department, in addition to seeking support from non-profits, the state and federal governments, to set up a pilot "Stockton" program in Yonkers. See <https://www.wliw.org/radio/news/california-program-giving-500-no-strings-attached-stipends-pays-off-study-finds/>. If we succeed in reducing crime, can we reduce the size of our police department? If we reduce the size of our police department, can we use the funds to help ameliorate dire poverty?

Needed: Review of No-Knock Warrants

One final concern, of great importance. Part I mentions in passing that the YPD routinely seeks and executes no-knock warrants - the situation of many injuries and deaths around the country, including both police deaths, and the deaths of African-American civilians like ER technician Breonna Taylor. The YPRC stated that it reviewed no-knock warrants, but its draft proposal seems to ignore the issue. Do these take place here in Yonkers the way we have seen them around the country: militarized, SWAT-team style home invasions, with battering rams knocking down doors and a phalanx of assault rifles pointed and ready to fire into living rooms or kitchens, bedrooms or bathrooms?

The YPD states that their main reasons for no-knock warrants are to prevent destruction of evidence in drug arrests, and to retain the element of surprise against people who might be armed. Is the YPD prepared to kill people to prevent their flushing drugs down the toilet? Even in draconian New York State, the most serious drug offenses carry prison terms, not death sentences. Because of the danger to police, suspects and bystanders, including children, of unannounced, heavily-armed home invasions, many states and cities have already banned or sharply limited no-knock warrants. (See "Cincinnati" <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2020/09/26/cincinnati-looks-banning-no-knock-warrants/3512566001/>) I urge the YPRC to request that Yonkers or New York State consider doing so, too, before anyone else dies unnecessarily.

As the YPRC report reminds us, the YPRC and YPD can't solve our society's deep social problems. But the war on drugs is YPD's primary rationale for no-knock home invasions. And the war on drugs is harming far more people than the drugs themselves (<https://www.aclu.org/other/against-drug-prohibition>). The history of the criminalization of heroine, cocaine and marijuana suggests that its primary domestic purpose was to arrest and incarcerate as many people of color as possible to prevent them from voting and gaining political power (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/war-on-drugs>). As early as the 1940's, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and Commissioner of the Bureau of Narcotics Harry Ainslinger published racist tracts demonizing marijuana and heroin to target and destroy Black artists and political activists. Blues singer Billie Holiday was singled out for vilification and a highly publicized drug arrest in 1947 for refusing to stop singing her poignant protest against

lynching, the song "Strange Fruit." At the very least, in the light of this history, the YPRC should advocate for an end to the drug war along with the no-knock militarized arrests it continues to justify. The war on drugs has little to nothing to do with the danger of drugs; it is an excuse for wars of occupation against communities of color, in the US (<https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-war-drugs-war-black-americans>) and around the world (<https://truthout.org/articles/pentagon-using-drug-wars-as-excuse-to-build-bases-in-latin-america/>). It is counter-insurgency. Its purpose is to keep power and wealth in the hands of the corporate elite where it currently resides. Ending the drug war may require an end to prohibition, not only of marijuana, but of all current "controlled substances," We urge the YPRC to consider whether their taking a public stand to end prohibition could help remove a primary rationale for militarized police violence.

The history of prohibition shows that making a substance illegal incentivizes increases in drugs' potency, so that smaller quantities can be more easily hidden and transported to yield higher value (<https://mises.org/library/economics-prohibition-0>). This increases the risks of addiction and overdose deaths.

If the YPRC is to help substantially reduce police violence, it might consider sharing with people enough of the history and economics of the war on drugs effectively to advocate for the end of prohibition and the transfer of funds from drug-war policing and incarceration to addiction treatment. Decriminalization would undermine the primary rationale for no-knock military invasions of people's homes. It would save many lives: those dying of drug overdoses; those dying of police violence; and those dying a living death locked inside prison cells.

Needed: Review of the Power of Advocacy

The YPRC may not be able to solve society's problems; but at least it can advocate to reduce crime through more equitable income distribution (perhaps if not via charitable cash gifts, then via reparations for slavery, lynchings, redlining, the war on drugs and mass incarceration); it can advocate transferring funds from police budgets, weapons, spying devices, big-data storage, jails and prisons to social needs and social services; and it can demand an end to the war on drugs that rationalizes militarization of the police, occupation-army-like spying, house invasions and mass incarceration of communities of color; and it can urge decriminalization of drug use, regulation of drug sales, and freeing people from prison who broke demagogically motivated and discrepantly enforced drug prohibitions.

Other Comments:

15. **Rafael T.**, Yonkers – Weed out the bad ones most are law abiding god bless them all.
16. **Don P.**, Yonkers – We need to make sure the police force mimics the ethnic make-up of the city itself. I see white officers predominating the force. I'd like to see the actual ethnic diversity percentages of the force published. I also want extensive background checks completed on the entire existing force. Those that show proof of right wing extremist relationships and comments be either demoted or fired outright. I believe the police forces of the United States of American are a cancer needing sections cut out in order to heal. What I also believe is those in control of the current police throughout the nation are as extreme in their beliefs of white supremacy and there is the need to retire and replace the old guard. The reckoning needs to happen from the top down. Police forces and the judicial makeup of judges and grand jurors are akin to the KKK in their habits and beliefs. They are the cause of the continuation for systemic racial injustice. The current Supreme Court of the United States is a perfect example. I hope that Yonkers, where I live and my children grow, can grow to be the exception. I wait to see.

APPENDIX

The following appendix, references the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Guidebook. The following report was presented to the Yonkers Police Reform Committee and did not offer an opinion on the effectiveness of these measures nor any others. Instead, the information and data presented in this report describe the current functions and operations of the Yonkers Police Department in alignment with the Guidebook.

APPENDIX



CITY OF YONKERS

POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE

Part I: YPD Information & Data

OCTOBER 2020



Dear Yonkers Police Reform Committee Members,

Thank you for playing a key role in the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. The part you serve on the Yonkers Police Reform Committee is one I know you will thrive in because of the communities you represent, coupled with your unique perspectives.

As stated in the Governor's resource guide, communities across the country are working to overcome issues concerning their police departments. We share in a common objective to improve police-community relations by reinventing law enforcement for the 21st century.

Since the beginning of my administration, the Yonkers Police Department has enacted over 100 different reforms to reimagine how local law enforcement interacts with the community. I am proud to say that the Yonkers Police Department has become a model for other law enforcement agencies to follow.

The recent incidents involving excessive force by police officers in cities across America speaks to the need to continue along a path of evolution. The Yonkers Police Department is committed to working hand-in-hand with this committee to help bring about recommendations and reforms that reflect both the needs of our communities and those of the men and women who serve and protect our city.

This initial report references Part 1, Section I of the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Guidebook and serves as a resource for you to understand the department better. I hope that you use this initial report as a guide to suggest further improvements to the Yonkers Police Department.

Together we will continue to lead by example.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Spano". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "M" and a cursive "Spano".

MIKE SPANO
Mayor





INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade New York State has enacted measures aimed at reforming the criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration in New York. As cited in the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Resources & Guide for Public Officials and Citizens (“the Guidebook”), these statewide measures have included the repeal of Section 50-a of Civil Rights Law, banning chokeholds, prohibiting race-based 911 calls, appointing the Attorney General as Independent Prosecutor for police involved deaths, measures to reduce prison population, bail reform, discovery reform, speedy trial reform, raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18-years-old, requiring videotaping of interrogations and permitting photo identification into evidence.

The following initial report presented to the Yonkers Police Reform Committee does not offer an opinion on the effectiveness of these measures nor any others. Instead, the information and data presented in this report describes the current functions and operations of the Yonkers Police Department in alignment with the topics and questions stated in Part 1, Section I, of the Guidebook. It is the intent of the City of Yonkers to provide unbiased, factual information to the committee to assist members in their formulation and submission of effective recommendations that will serve to improve police-community relations and public safety.



PART 1: KEY QUESTIONS AND INSIGHTS FOR CONSIDERATION

SECTION I.

WHAT FUNCTIONS SHOULD THE POLICE PERFORM?

1. Police/Community Engagement – Adopting Procedural Justice

The Yonkers Police Department utilizes a New York State Department of Criminal Justice endorsed Procedural Justice training curriculum to provide training in two (2) eight-hour training modules. The first module is Procedural Justice 1 (PJ1). The curriculum focuses on the four tenets of procedural justice – treating individuals with dignity and respect; giving individuals a voice during law enforcement interactions; being neutral and transparent in decision making; and conveying trustworthy motives. Procedural Justice 2 (PJ2) focuses on implicit bias.

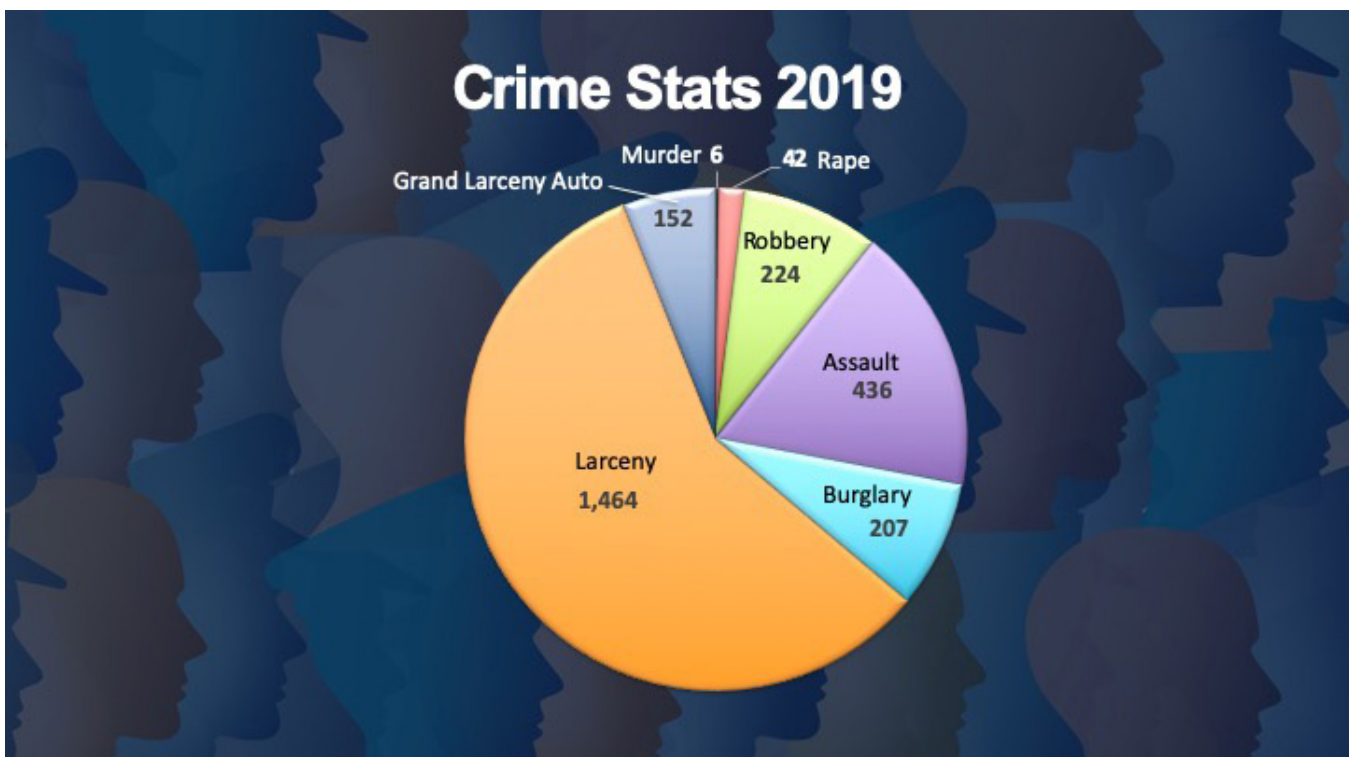
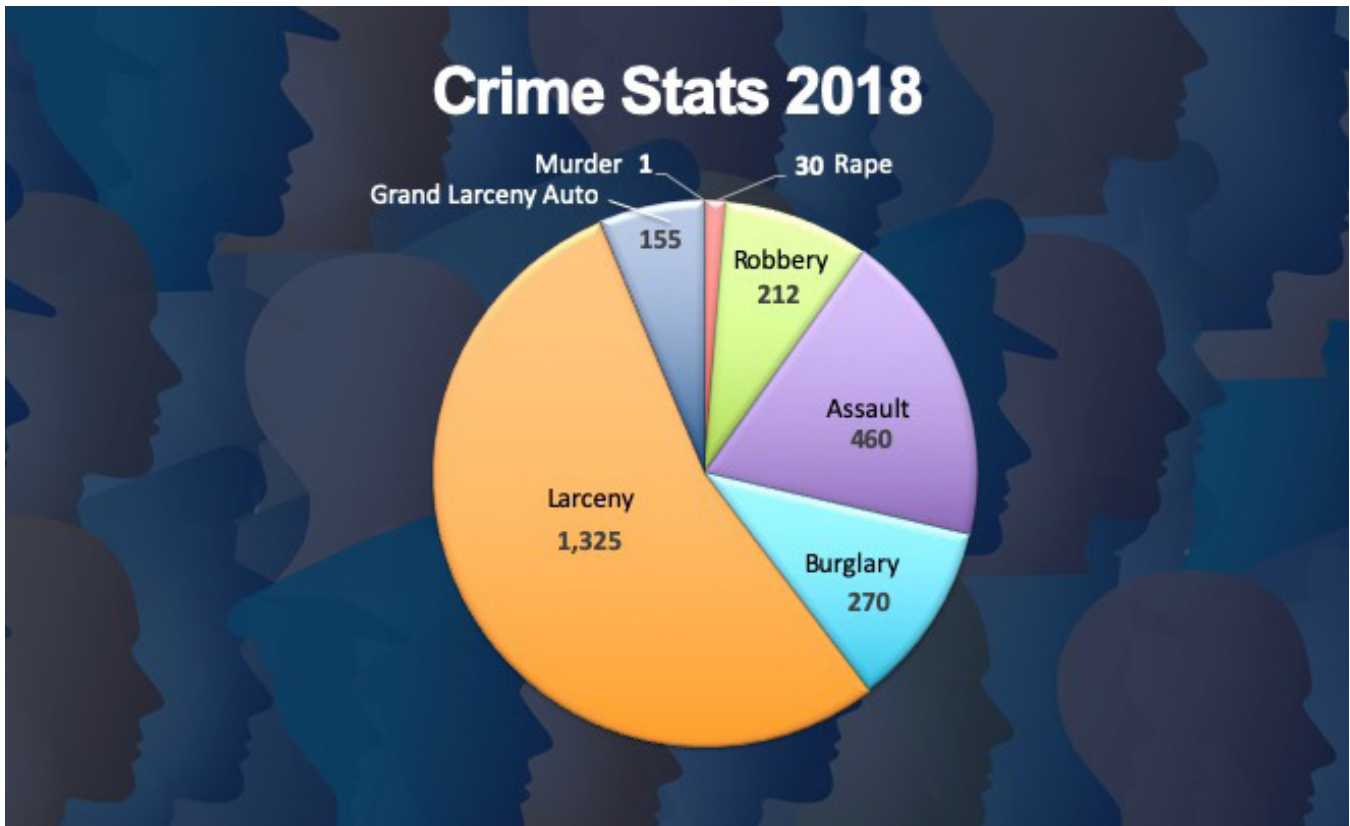
The Yonkers Police Department embraces Procedural Justice with the recognition that while highly publicized abuses of authority by police officers fuel distrust and erode legitimacy, less publicized, day-to-day interactions between community members and law enforcement are also influential in shaping people's long-term attitudes toward the police. Procedural Justice training for police officers has been found to be effective in lowering incidences of excessive force, overall number of complaints and substantiated complaints.

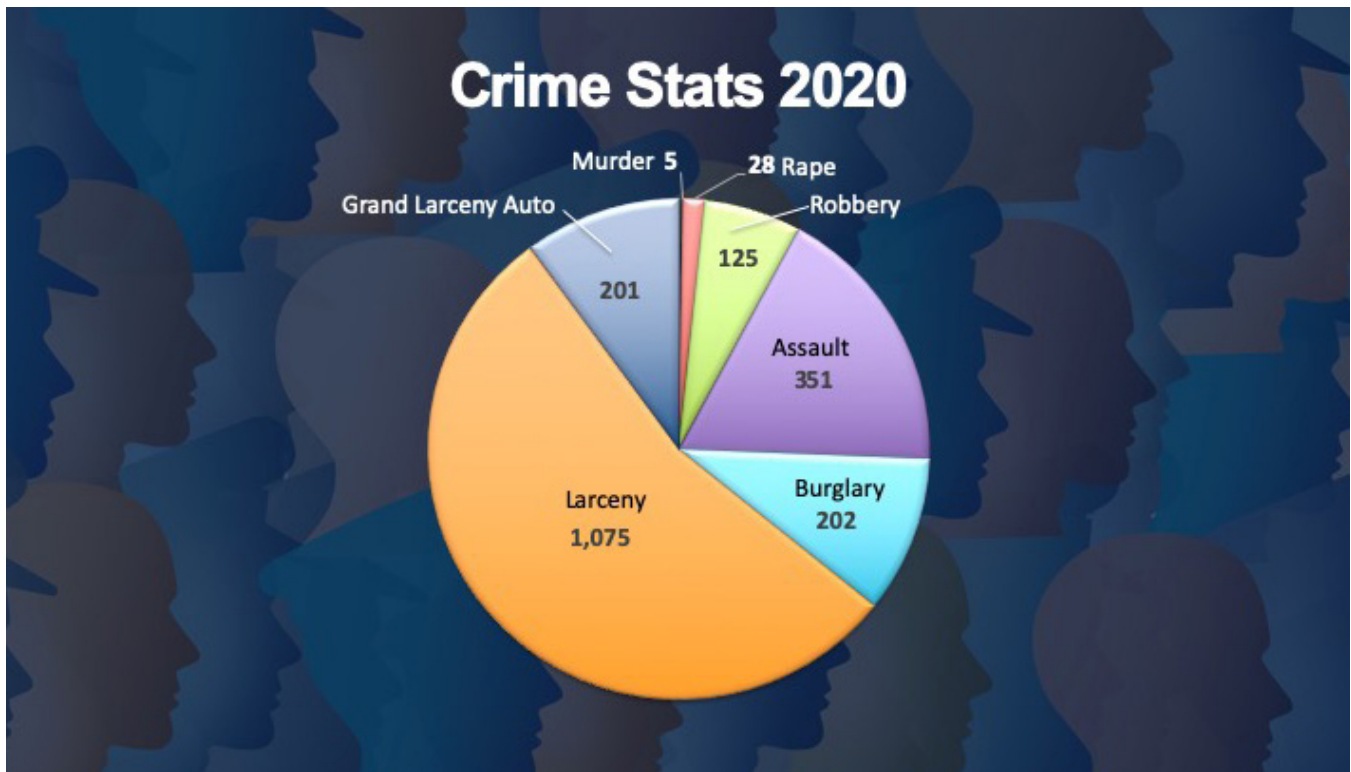
2. What role do the police currently play in your community?

a) What are the primary activities of police officers in your community?

The YPD Crime Control Strategies Division meets weekly to discuss crime trends, offender status, resource deployment, etc. Members of the Yonkers Public Schools security team and representatives from Probation and Parole are also present. Through intelligence sharing and dialogue, strategies are developed for best focusing the YPD's precision policing model with respect to top offenders and active crime trends. The result of each meeting is a strategy for the most effective deployment of resources for the upcoming week.

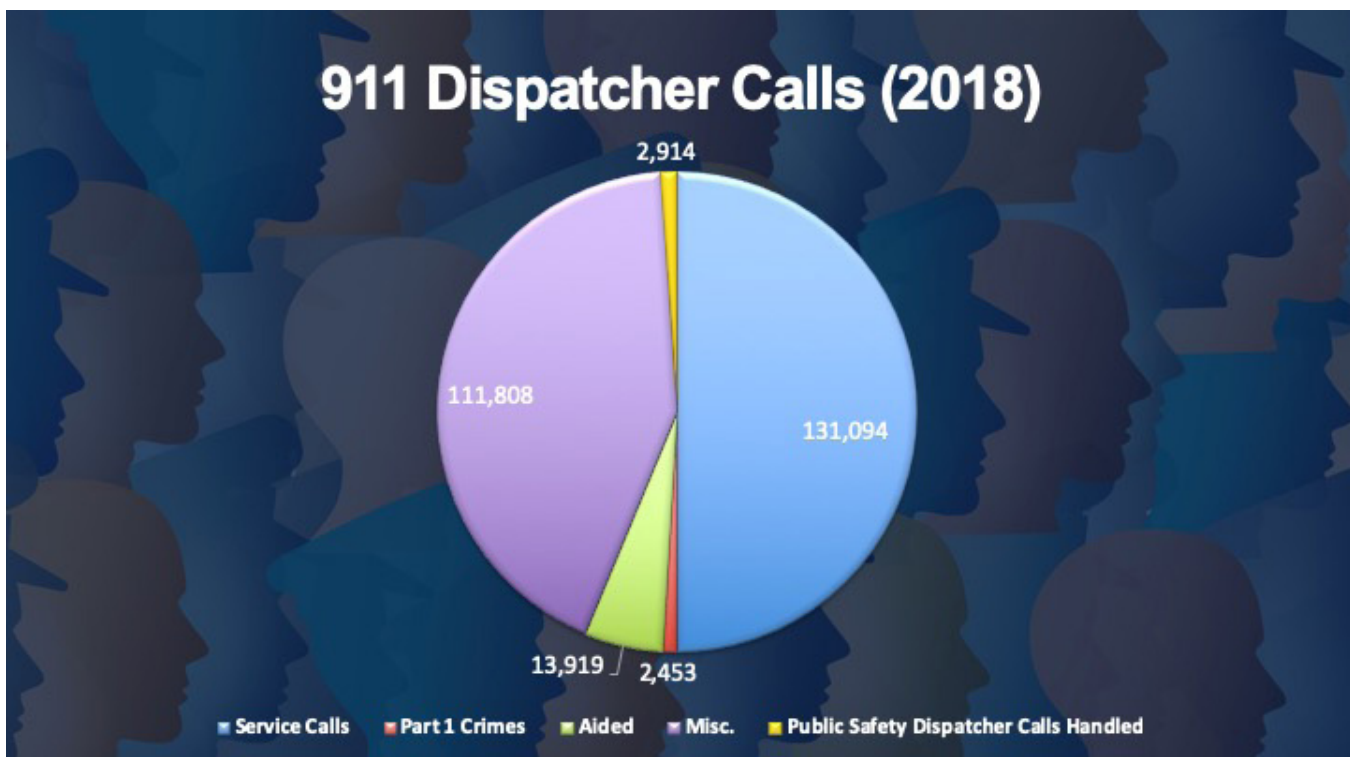
The graphs below break down crime stats for 2018, 2019, and 2020 year-to-date which demonstrate the types of criminal activities YPD are responding:



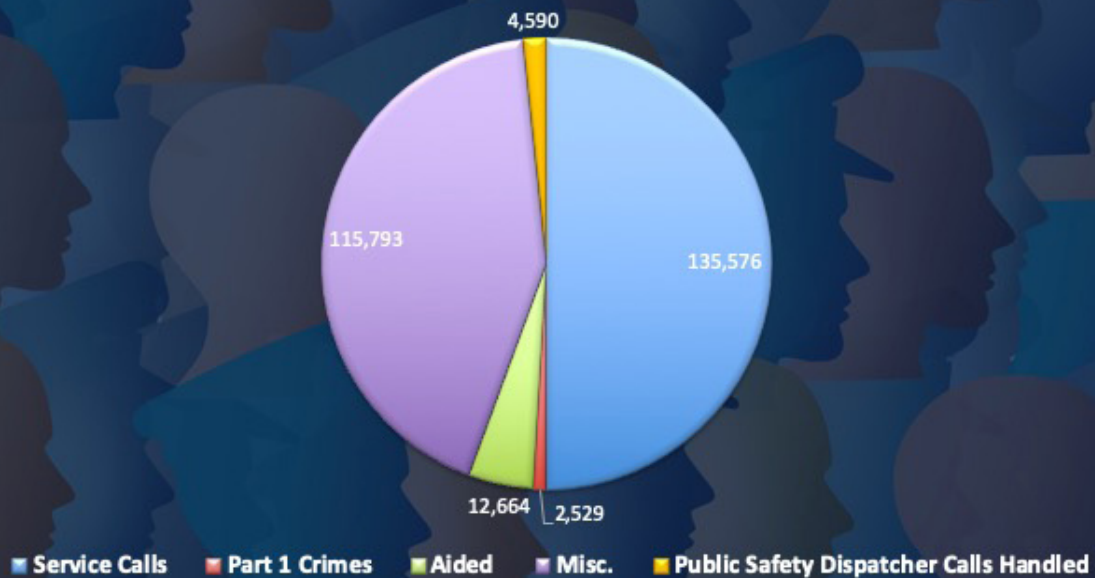


b) Why are people calling 911?

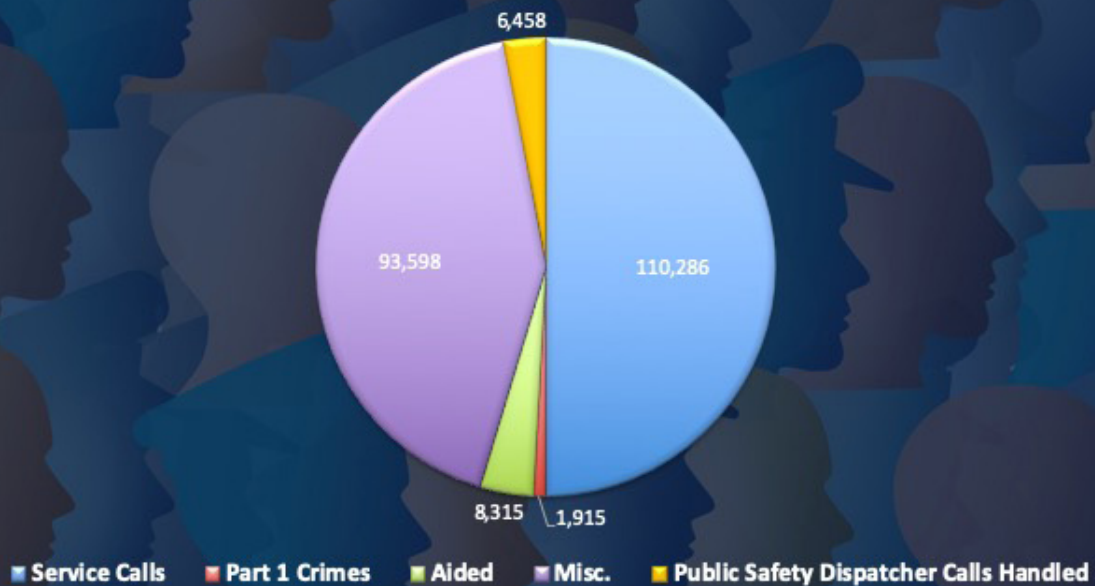
The graphs below show the number of 911 Dispatcher Calls for 2018, 2019 and 2020, as well as the reasons for the 911 call. The types of calls depicted are categorized by the public safety dispatcher. The outcome of the event may differ from the reason for dispatch.



911 Dispatcher Calls (2019)



911 Dispatcher Calls (2020)



(Service Calls: general calls responded to by YPD; Part 1 Crimes: categorized by the FBI as murder, manslaughter, sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson; Aided Calls: EMS responded; misc. various complaints; P.S.D. Calls: public safety dispatcher was able to satisfy the caller)

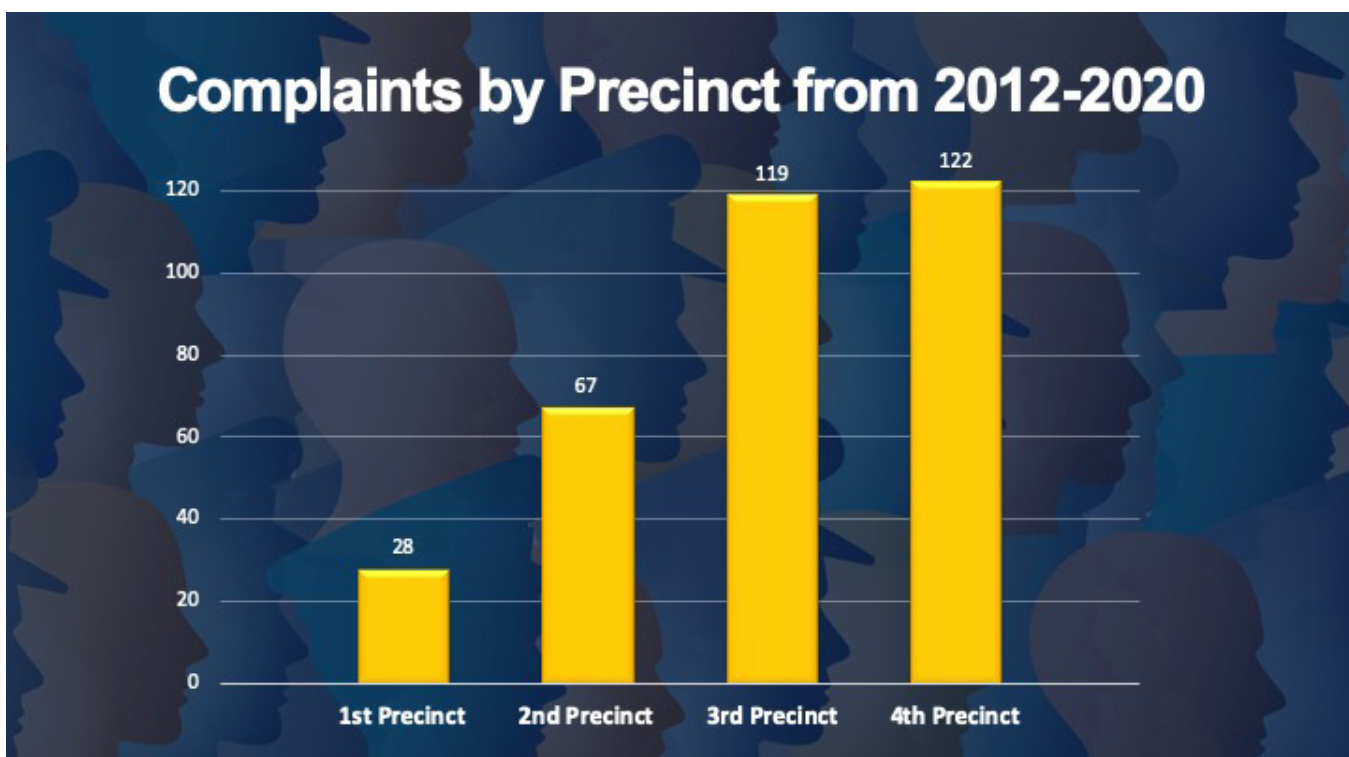
c) In what situations do police self-initiate interventions with the community?

YPD officers do not generally self-initiate interventions with the community. Exceptions include community policing initiatives and homeless outreach.

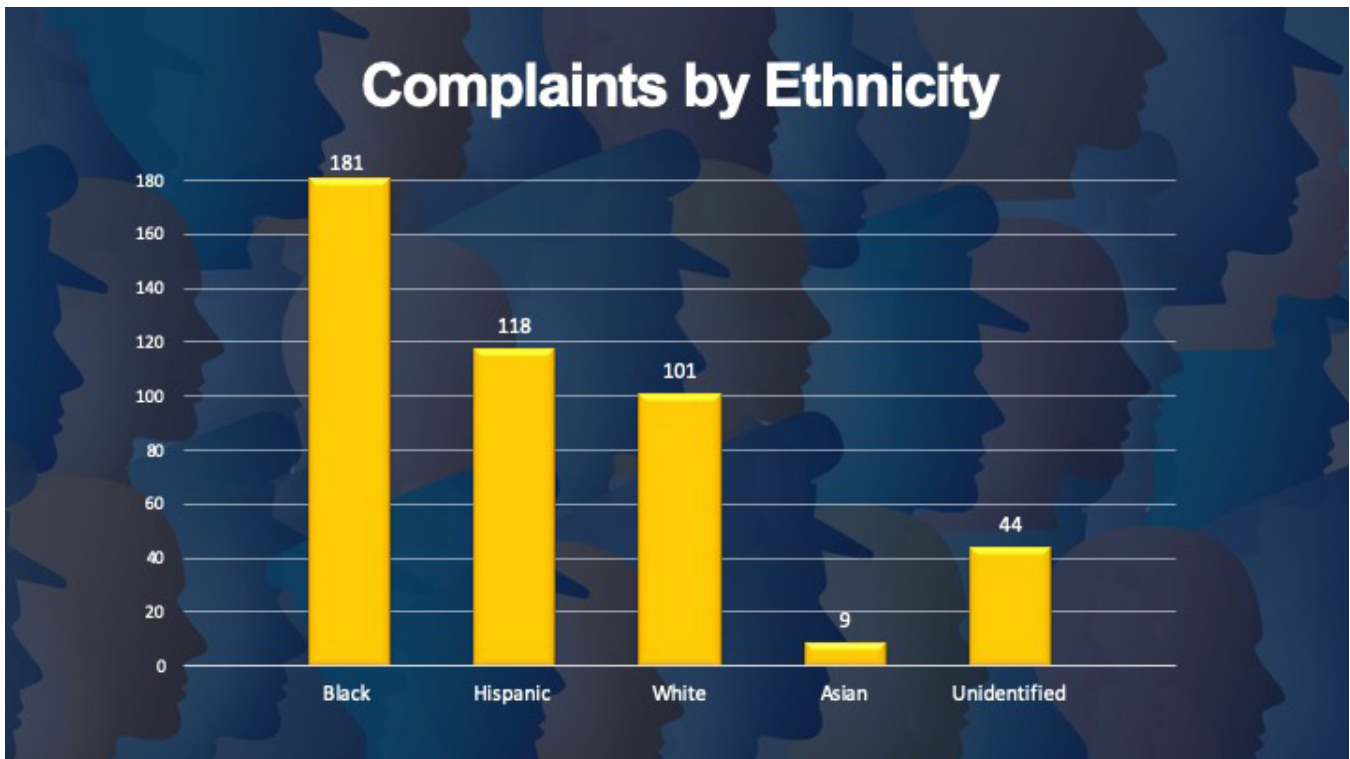
d) How often are complaints made about the police?



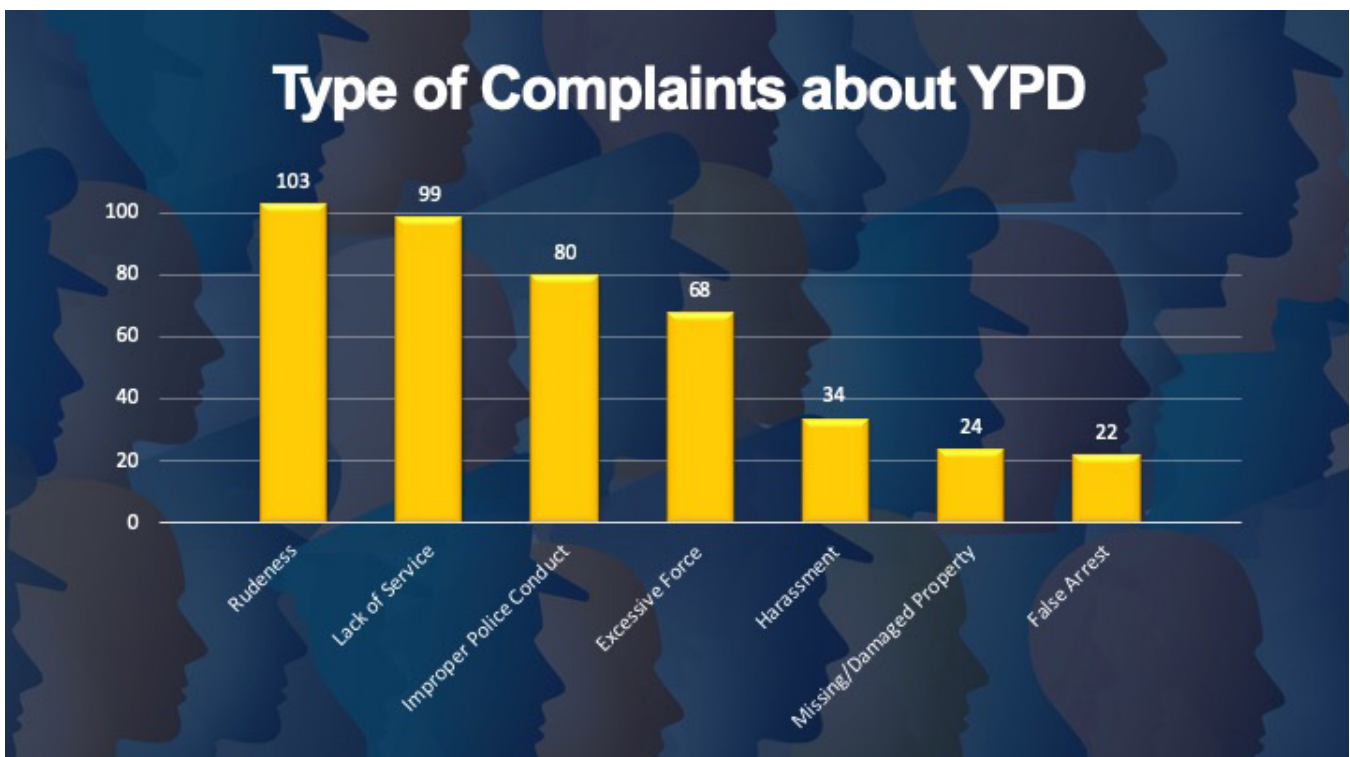
e) Do particular units or assignments draw an outsized share of complaints?



f) Do complaints come from a particular portion or portions of the community?



g) What type of conduct is commonly complained about?





3. Should you deploy social service personnel instead of or in addition to police officers in some situations?

YPD's Homeless Outreach is currently staffed by a P.O. and a Sgt. with assistance from 2 additional P.O.s who are assigned to Getty Square. The current duties include:

- Daily response to calls for service relating to the large homeless presence in Getty Square. During these encounters they offer assistance with various available services including placement in shelters, medical care, psychiatric care or substance abuse counseling.
- Proactively approach homeless individuals and again offer the above mentioned services. Homeless Outreach P.O. conducts a 3 hour ride-along during his tour with Lamont Brown Sr. who is a Case Manager, Mobile Mental Health Team for the Westchester Department of Social Services. Again, they attempt to locate homeless individuals and encourage them to take the services provided by the Department of Health. At times they are assisted by substance abuse counselors and mental health specialists who also work for the Department of Health. During some of these encounters, YPD Homeless Outreach is able to provide care packages that include snacks, water, socks and other hygienic sanitary items.
- Weekly patrol of known spots where the homeless tend to sleep overnight, including the train station, parks, parking garages, business vestibules and other areas where complaints of homeless people sleeping overnight are received. Officers offer services and attempt to get the individuals to make use of the shelters that are located in the City of Yonkers.

4. Can your community reduce violence more effectively by redeploying resources from policing to other programs?

a) Community Based Outreach and Violence Interruption

The Guidebook suggests implementing SNUG, a program that uses an evidence-based model to identify individuals with a high risk of engaging in gun violence. As noted in the Guidebook, Yonkers has a robust SNUG program that has effectively assisted with community based outreach with regard to violence interruption.

b) Parent Support

The Yonkers Police Department has developed, offers and promotes information on programs available for parents/caregivers needing assistance with guiding a wayward child. Examples of programs include:



Surviving Quarantine with a Teenager?

As Adults we're more prepared to face this temporary lifestyle but adolescents thrive on being social, mobile and pushing their independence!

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

1. Frustrated Adolescents can be very vocal and say hurtful things but don't take it personal! Acknowledge its stemming from their sense of confinement and current disappointments. Validate their emotions but be clear about your expectations during this time.
2. Avoid unnecessary conflicts. Confrontations with adolescents are unavoidable and even more these days. Allow adolescents privacy at times in their own space to cool down. Walking away in order to keep the peace may be today's best alternative!
3. Create daily routines, clear responsibilities and acknowledge each day. Routines are important during unknown times and are the one thing adolescents can depend on. Differentiating between school time, meals and virtual socializing can help fulfill each day with a purpose.
4. Listen to your adolescents and be present. Express empathy, put yourself in their shoes. Encourage daily conversation. Check-ins are essential and can avoid built up emotions and stress.

**Additional Support and Connective Resources
are available through the Yonkers Police Department.**

**Contact our Youth Advisor Alison Licht
914.803.2479 – Alison.Licht@ypd.yonkersny.gov**



SUPPORTING A CHILD'S MENTAL WELLNESS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER!

- **Reassure children they are in a safe environment.** Home should be a NO judgment zone to talk about their current feelings.
- **Keep daily structure and routine.** Promoting mental wellness starts with appropriate sleep, physical activity and a healthy diet.
- **Limit Media Exposure.** Provide current information in an age appropriate and easy way to understand.
- **Be a Role Model.** Practice healthy coping skills and stress related reactions.
- **Trust your gut!**

Quarantine is tough for all but if you notice your child is having extreme difficulty, there is support.

Supportive Resources are available thru the Yonkers Police Department.

**Contact our Youth Advisor Alison Licht
914-803-2479
Alison.Licht@ypd.yonkersny.gov**

A photograph of a young person with dark curly hair, wearing a white shirt, covering their face with their hands, appearing to be crying or distressed. The background is blurred.

IS YOUR CHILD STRUGGLING EMOTIONALLY?

**THE YONKERS POLICE CAN HELP
CALL YOUTH ADVISOR ALISON LICHT
914-803-2479**

A circular seal for the Yonkers Police Department is located in the bottom right corner of the image. It features the words 'SERVICE', 'INTEGRITY', and 'RESPECT' around the perimeter, with a central emblem.

c) Youth Development & Addressing Trauma & Preventing Violence at Home

The Yonkers Police Department has created various programs in support of youth development and supporting a strong and healthy home:

- **Youth Court Membership**

Offered to Yonkers youth between the ages of thirteen (13) and eighteen (18) years-old with an interest in the juvenile criminal justice system and law. Members must be students in good standing and complete an in-house training program prior to participating. The Yonkers Youth Court are provided opportunities to speak with professionals in the judicial field.

- **Youth Court Community Service**

Youth Court participants complete community service assignments with a focus on building their skills for future employment and their resume. YPD partners with organizations such as the AFYA Foundation and Groundwork Hudson Valley to offer these opportunities to youth.

- **Youth Community Service**

Volunteer placement for local youth in search of community service opportunities and experience is provided. This program provides for positive interaction between local youth and police and aims to counter the stigma of community service only being a punishment for criminals.

- **Police Athletic League (PAL) Programs**

- **Boxing:** Since the mid 1970's, the PAL has offered free training in boxing for all Yonkers youth. Participants are given intensive diet and exercise regimens and trained daily in fundamentals. Eventually, after gaining enough experience they are given the opportunity to spar and then participate in actual matches. The Yonkers PAL Boxing Program has produced multiple world champions and Olympic medalists, not to mention several Golden Gloves Champions. It is and always has been free of charge and is currently run by retired Yonkers Police Officer Sal Corrente.
- **Baseball:** The PAL Baseball Program is another free program that has produced dozens of scholarship-winning players from the City of Yonkers and currently has multiple former members playing at the college level. Players are introduced to the basics of the game and are provided the opportunity to learn and practice year-round inside the facility's large gym which includes a batting cage, a pitcher's mound, a mixed-use turf area for ground balls and hitting, and a weight room. This comprehensive baseball program is as much about mentorship and creating outstanding individuals as it is about learning the game. The program is currently run by retired Yonkers Police Officer Victor Mendez.
- **Karate:** The PAL's low-cost Karate Program, offered in the facility's Dojo Room, teaches discipline and martial arts and is currently run by former PAL karate graduate Eric Camacho who is a Sergeant with the NYPD. This program does have a fee, but is substantially lower in cost than most private programs.

- **Basketball:** The PAL Open Gym Basketball Program has been run continuously since the PAL took over the armory building on North Broadway roughly 20 years ago. Open gym basketball provides youth a safe, warm, and free place to play after school between the hours of 2:45 PM – 7 PM. There are six hoops which host continual games and youth are free to play wherever they feel most comfortable with no restrictions on time, skill level or age. Youth as young as 10-years-old and as old as 18-years-old can play and are expected to conduct themselves responsibly. All youth voluntarily comply with a dress code and respect the rules and rights of all others. Open gym basketball is a year-round program that is free for all Yonkers youth and fosters structure and safety; the program is administered by the PAL police officers assigned to the Community Affairs Division.
- **Food Distribution:** The PAL, in collaboration with Feeding Westchester, has created a large scale, monthly produce distribution program. The PAL also became a “Backpack” location, meaning that every month the PAL receives and distributes non-perishable items in individually packed bags.

d) Design of Public Spaces - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) examines how environmental features create opportunities for crime and how those features can be adjusted to eliminate those opportunities. Adjustments can be implemented to:

- 1) Control or make access more difficult
- 2) Deter offenders by increasing the risk of apprehension
- 3) Increase visibility
- 4) Increase or encourage guardianship
- 5) Regulate or adjust behaviors and routines; or
- 6) Reduce the rewards for crime.

Examples of environmental features that could create opportunities for crime include trees and shrubbery that block visibility; lack of lighting; traffic direction or lack of signaling; abandoned buildings; alleyways or cuts in between buildings; and empty lots hidden from the street. Adjustments that address these features may include cutting down shrubs to increase visibility; adding lighting to a dark alley; boarding up abandoned homes; or improving traffic conditions by adding signage, signals and speed bumps.

CPTED has been implemented in Ella Fitzgerald Park and Mill Street Courtyard.

5. What functions should 911 Call Centers play in your community?

a) Who currently staffs your 911 call centers?

Trained City of Yonkers Public Service Dispatchers who are provided approximately four months of training.

b) Are all calls routed to law enforcement, fire, or EMS?

Yes, all calls are routed to Police, Fire, or EMS.

c) Are there other social services that should be more fully integrated into 911 call centers and the triage process? Would call-takers need new training if your community wanted to shift response functions toward social services?

New call-takers would require additional training and resources in a shift towards integrating social services into 911 call centers.

d) Should 911 call centers be operated by law enforcement, other social service agencies, or a combination of agencies?

Call centers maintain focus on emergency services. In the past, YPD has coordinated services for emotionally disturbed persons with the Westchester County Mobile Crisis Team. The team would be accompanied by police officers while performing welfare checks based on requests from family members and mental health professionals. If an individual needed emergency treatment, it would be so ordered at the direction of a psychiatrist under the guidelines of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and under the authority of NYS Mental Hygiene Law.

6. Should Law Enforcement Have a Presence in Schools?

Both the DARE and School Resource Officer programs were dissolved in 2009 due to budget constraints. Since that time, local patrol officers have built relationships with school administrators in the various schools in their sectors. Oftentimes school security or administrators will call for assistance or mediation with a student that is exhibiting concerning behavior. Patrol Officers will often mediate and resolve issues without any further assistance required.

Patrol officers are sometimes called to make arrests when students are found in possession of weapons, drugs, or otherwise break the law on school grounds. In these cases, the student is brought to the Community Affairs Division for arrest processing. It is in this area that the Yonkers Police Department has made tremendous strides in its efforts to break the “school to prison pipeline.” In late 2019, the Yonkers Police Department integrated the Youth Division with the Community Affairs Unit and brought a new civilian youth advisor into the division. This allowed for reinvention of how youth arrests are handled. Beginning in 2020 all youth arrested for misdemeanors are interviewed by Community Affairs staff for eligibility in the Youth Court Diversion Program. If a youth meets the parameters and volunteers to be in the program, they are diverted from the Family Court System into the YPD Youth Court program, thereby keeping them out of the juvenile justice system. Arrested youth are then tried by a group of their peers and sentenced to serve time working in various programs run by the members of the Community Affairs Division. The benefit of this program is not only that of keeping youth out of the court system, but also engaging them in completing community service and positive interaction with police officers and community groups. These interactions build mentorships and job skills that serve to build character and perhaps change their perception of law enforcement officers.

In addition to the above, many of the YPD’s community outreach programs are designed to specifically engage youth and young adults in the local school district (i.e. Cops & Kids, Youth Police Initiative, Yonkers Police Cadets, etc.). These engagements place Yonkers Police officers and local youth in a non-enforcement environment, leading to positive communication opportunities for all parties. Both officers and kids get the opportunity to exchange ideas and information freely and learn from each other by sharing perspectives. For an in-depth look at these outreach programs, please see the 2020 Community Outreach Program book.

STAFFING, BUDGETING, AND EQUIPPING YOUR POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. What are the staffing needs of the Police Department the community wants? Should components of the Police Department be civilianized?

The Yonkers Police Department currently uses civilians for job functions that do not call for an arrest or potential use of force.

2. Police Department engagement in crowd control

This past June, the City of Yonkers Police Department responded to three large protests within the same week in response to nationwide incidents of police brutality. The involved command staff worked diligently to evaluate police response following each event and quickly implemented improvements for the next.

Some of the key provisions of YPD's response are presented here:

Utilization of a Mobile Field Force

Prior to the first event on May 31, a plan was formulated to create a mobile field force of six officers and one supervisor utilizing four vehicles. This was conducted in lieu of an on-foot or stationary field force. Several considerations were taken into account in the planning stages to arrive at this particular plan.

It was noticed that most demonstrations started as a stationary protest and then became a march. Often the targets of these marches were police and government facilities. However, police departments in those cities that deployed a traditional field force, predominately on foot, often became the target of the protests and resulted in hostile confrontation. Utilizing a vehicle-based, mobile force instead served to provide safe escort to peaceful marchers while protecting officers from thrown objects by anyone seeking to instigate violent confrontation. The mobility of YPD's field force provided movable pieces to command so that potential targets and routes could be quickly covered. Disorder control equipment was issued at turn out and kept in each individual vehicle. A method of deploying said equipment was established with the command 'mobilize,' which provided a systematic transition, by squad, to a more assertive posture without inciting the crowd.

Adequate Resources Without a 'Show of Force'

It was also critical to have enough resources on hand to respond to any condition, without showing a large police presence. Instead, the command staff deployed personnel in small groups (squads) to strategic locations – just enough to show a reasonable presence and to provide security. A larger field force was pre-deployed to a formal staging area, as well as forward staging areas closer to the event and out of sight. This included officer down rescue teams, EMS, arrest teams and immediate action squads. YPD deployed, at times, over 100 officers, most of whom were never seen by a participant.

In August, NYPD Deputy Chief John Hart stated to the Police Executive Research Forum, that after several nights of stationary officers being targeted in Union Square Park, “ ... we decided to monitor protests, but not make the cops the show. We want to make sure we have a good fix on the protest and where it’s going, but avoid that line of confrontation when we can. That takes away the visual and de-escalates the violence.” These concepts were utilized by YPD from the very first event.

Utilizing Specialized Units

Another key component of the response to protests in Yonkers was the work done by the Community Affairs Division, Public Information Office and Special Investigations Unit in achieving effective communication with organizers and participants in an effort to keep the crowds peaceful. While doing so, these officers also gathered intelligence that the command staff could use for planning.

Proper Utilization of Outside Resources

Finally, the utilization and coordination of available resources was crucial to the command staff in deploying the field force. Additional manpower from mutual aid agencies, support structure and staff from the Office of Emergency Management and communications support from the Westchester County Department of Emergency Services were all important pieces in this mission.

3.Training & Equipment

In 2017, approximately 7 members of the Training Division attended a FEMA sponsored course called Field Force Operations which is the newer version of Disorder Control. A training course has since been developed for YPD officers, however the department has yet to implement it.

The Yonkers Police Department is equipped with shields, riot batons and duffle bags containing chest, shoulder, elbow and shin pads (these belonged to individual officers that were part of the old Emergency Response Team). YPD also owns specialty emergency response vehicles that are used for rescue operation and assistance, as well as surveillance equipment, including drones, used for investigative purposes.

Equipment and vehicles described above are funded almost entirely through Federal Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) funding.



SECTION II.

EMPLOYING SMART AND EFFECTIVE POLICING STANDARDS AND STRATEGIES

1.Procedural Justice and Community Policing

a) Create a comprehensive community policing strategic plan

The Yonkers Police Department engages in strategic community policing practices both with its dedicated Community Affairs Unit, which oversees over 40 different outreach programs (see *Supplemental Community Outreach Programs Guidebook*), and through officers' daily interactions with the public and all Yonkers Police Officers are trained in the Police Academy and in-service with the Training Division to approach every public contact and engagement as an opportunity for building positive relationships and trust. YPD also has over a dozen police officers assigned to steady neighborhood patrol to focus on neighborhood issues while developing lasting relationships with residents and business owners. The Community Affairs Division is tasked with building those relationships with youth and adults citywide; having a dedicated unit enables the Yonkers Police to have an opportunity to engage with every neighborhood and community in the City.

b) Train all personnel on community policing – including overcoming distrust.

All YPD members go through comprehensive training in the police academy as well as the Yonkers Police Department which incorporates community policing components and instruction by the Community Affairs Division and Public Information Officer. Additionally, major components of procedural justice training integrate community policing and developing community trust in the program.

c) Foster an atmosphere of openness and transparency.

YPD seeks to foster an atmosphere of openness and transparency through community policing initiatives, programs and training as well as through engagement with local community based organizations and media outlets. The Police Commissioner and Public Information Officer routinely communicate with the media and hold meetings with community groups to discuss current events, incidents, initiatives, training, and guiding principles. YPD also has a presence on social media and communicates police news and events through these outlets with an approximate outreach of about 50,000 people. The Yonkers Police Department recognizes accountability and transparency as core components of building community trust.

d) Adopt procedural justice as a guiding principle

The Yonkers Police Department's mission statement parallels the principles of procedural justice and all members are currently scheduled to go through a procedural justice training program – including implicit bias training – sponsored by Yale University.

e) Prioritize law enforcement personnel safety and wellness.

Health and Wellness – Members Assistance Program Coordinator (MAP)

The Yonkers Police Department has a dedicated officer to ensure health and safety of their members. Detective Autumn Edwards serves as an internal Employee Assistance Professional. The foundation of Det. Edwards' work is relationship building. She invests in building relationships that are rooted in care, concern, integrity, and authenticity. Det. Edwards addresses the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health and wellness of the membership and their families. These needs look different for each member depending on the circumstance and severity of the crisis or situation. Her duties are a direct response to what the individual member needs at the time.

Det. Edwards has facilitated interventions and transported members to detox and rehabilitation facilities. She serves as a meeting buddy attending AA meetings, with those new to recovery – making appropriate referrals when necessary. She acts as a liaison between treatment facilities and YPD and serves as a coach for those actively trying to live sober lives.

Det. Edwards oversees the Department's Peer Support Team and Police Chaplains. She facilitates bi-monthly team meetings with the peer team during which she provides training and support to the team. She is in close contact with police chaplains and relies on them to provide spiritual and practical support to YPD membership.

When called upon, Det. Edwards coordinates critical incident debriefings and facilitates group and individual crisis interventions. She responds to the scenes of major incidents and serves as a resource for the officers involved. She activates the peer support team when appropriate and visits each command to ensure the health and healing of each member impacted.

f) Engage the community in a true partnership to address crime and disorder issues.

Yonkers Police Precinct commanders meet on a monthly basis with local community leaders and stakeholders to discuss crime topics and strategies. These public meetings are organized by the local Precinct Community Council and provide an opportunity for police and residents to work together in addressing public safety issues and quality of life complaints. Meeting dates, times and locations are published online: <https://www.yonkersny.gov/live/public-safety/police-department/pct-community-meetings>

g) Treat every contact as an opportunity to engage positively with a community member.

Treating every contact with a community member as an opportunity for positive engagement is a concept addressed in the YPD's training curriculum and emphasized with its members.

h) Measure social cohesion and work to develop relationships and reevaluate metrics of community policing success

YPD compiles and reports on crime statistics and crime data and measures trends to determine the success and need for reallocating resources. Most recently the Department has been measuring community satisfaction through public opinion polls (*see supplemental handout*).

i) Incorporate community policing measures into the performance evaluation process.

Performance evaluations would be a negotiated item within the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

2. Policing Strategies of Concern to the Public

a) “Broken Windows” and “Stop & Frisk”

Broken Windows:

YPD does not regularly engage in a Broken Windows theory unless it is to the benefit of community outreach. YPD is now working with local leaders in locations that have on-going quality of life complaints in an effort to get compliance through cooperation, rather than through enforcement. The four pillars of Procedural Justice play a key role in this effort.

Stop and Frisk:

YPD uses the Precision Policing Model which is built around the theory that a very small subset of repeat offenders are responsible for the majority of crime. YPD is aware of its persistent offenders and their custody stats. This has allowed the YPD to maintain low crime levels while at the same time keeping stops at an extreme minimum and does not engage in stop, question and frisk.

b) Discriminatory or Bias-Based Stops, Searches and Arrests

YPD does not engage in discriminatory or bias-based stops, searches and arrests. The Department does engage in criminal profiling – for example, following-up on a description provided by a victim or witness.

C. Chokeholds and Other Restrictions on Breathing

Chokeholds were banned by the Yonkers Police Department in 2012. Neck control holds are limited to deadly physical force situations (i.e. life and death struggle necessary to save the life of an officer or other).

d) Use of Force for Punitive or Retaliatory Reasons

YPD has a Use of Force policy and internal review procedure (*see supplemental handout*). In any case of force being used by an officer, the situation and circumstances are automatically investigated by a police supervisor (regardless of whether or not a civilian complaint is filed). Force is never used for retaliatory or punitive reasons.

e) Pretextual Stops

There is no specific policy on pretextual stops.

f) Informal Quotas for Summonses, Tickets or Arrests

There are no quotas, formal or informal, for summonses, tickets, or arrests.

g) Shooting at Moving Vehicles and High Speed Pursuits

There are policies that cover both instances (*see supplemental handout*).

h) Use of SWAT Teams and No-Knock Warrants

No Knock Warrant services:

While YPD's common practice is to knock prior to executing a search warrant, YPD does usually get a "No Knock" endorsement mainly for the following reasons listed in the Criminal Procedure Law (CPL):

- The property sought may be easily and quickly destroyed or disposed of.
- The giving of such notice may endanger the life or safety of the executing officer or another person.

Detectives indicate their reasoning for the no-knock endorsement in their application for a search warrant. The vast majority of search warrants that the Narcotics Unit applies for have no-knock endorsements mainly to prevent the destruction of evidence which can occur if they announce their purpose and authority. Additionally, the drug trade frequently involves the use of firearms and knocking may endanger the officers executing the search warrant.

Use of Emergency Services Unit (ESU):

In the planning portion of a search warrant YPD completes an Operational Plan which is reviewed and approved by the Deputy Chief of the Investigations Bureau. This Operational Plan includes a Special Considerations/Risk Assessment portion that will be used to determine if the warrant is executed by the Narcotics/Gang Units or in conjunction with the Emergency Services Unit. Reasons for using ESU to execute a search warrant are as follows:

- If there is confirmed intelligence that a firearm is inside of the premise.
- If multiple search warrants are being executed in one location or simultaneously.
- If it is confirmed that there is a dangerous dog on the premise.
- If a suspect has a history of extremely violent acts.
- Any other reason that it is deemed that ESU will be needed i.e. steel doors, multiple locks, etc.
- ESU also considers the presence of children and vulnerable people.

ESU (SWAT) Warrant "Hits" since 2012:

The Yonkers Police executed forty six (46) warrants involving ESU since 2012, the majority being "no-knock" warrants.

i) Less-Than-Lethal Weaponry such as Tasers and Pepper Spray

All officers undergo DCJS approved training from the device manufacturer and the Yonkers Police Training Unit for proper application and proper utilization in the use-of-force continuum.

j) Facial Recognition Technology

The Yonkers Police Investigations Bureau is currently operating several Facial Recognition software platforms through New York State and Westchester County: HIDTA PIMS, Cleaview AI, and Vigilant. Facial recognition software is limited to assisting in identifying suspects and perpetrators of crimes; the identification procedures must still be reviewed by a court as a matter of process. The Yonkers Police Department does not utilize Facial Recognition for any non-criminal investigation purposes, nor is facial recognition used solely for effecting arrest.

3. Law Enforcement Strategies to Reduce Racial Disparities and Build Trust

a) Using Summonses Rather than Warrantless Arrests for Specified Offenses

Summonses are utilized when legally applicable. Due to recent changes in state law most arrested offenders are released with desk appearance tickets.

b) Diversion Programs

The Yonkers Police Department does have a youth diversion program for first time, non-violent youth offenders. At the direction of a Community Affairs officer, an impacted youth may be diverted away from the Family Court (Criminal Justice System) into one of our outreach programs and Youth Court for community service, resulting in no arrest record. See the Community Outreach Programs guidebook for details.

c) Restorative Justice Programs

Not a current function of the Yonkers Police Department.

d) Community-Based Outreach and Violence Interruption Programs

The Yonkers Police Department does participate in community-based outreach and violence interruption programs. Details on programs are included in the YPD Community Outreach Programs guidebook.

e) Hot-Spot Policing and Focused Deterrence

The Yonkers Police Department engages in the strategy of precision policing, where top offenders are targeted for enforcement. This moves away from hot-spot policing and “over-policing” of neighborhoods.

f) De-Escalation Strategies

All officers undergo de-escalation training in the police academy and by the Yonkers Police Training unit (i.e. verbal judo, dealing with emotionally disturbed persons, etc.)

g) Can Your Community Effectively Identify, Investigate and Prosecute Hate Crimes?

The Yonkers Police Department has policies and procedures in place for dealing with bias incidents. Subsequent to a report, members of the Community Affairs Division will respond to the scene and engage the community to determine if the incident is isolated or indicative of a larger issue, and report back to the Police Commissioner’s Office for appropriate review and response.

4. Community Engagement

a) Community Outreach Plans

YPD has a Community Outreach Programs guidebook detailing all available programs.

b) Citizen Advisory Boards and Committees

Precinct Community Councils are in place to advise local precinct commanders as to current issues and events and make recommendations. Additionally, the Police Professional Standards Review Committee meets on a monthly basis to review Internal Complaints and make recommendations.

c) Partnership with Community Organizations and Faith Communities

YPD partners with many community based organizations through community outreach programs. YPD's Health and Wellness coordinator maintains active relationships with local clergy. YPD also regularly engages with Mayor's Faith-Based meetings.

d) Partnering with Students and Schools

The Yonkers Police Department has multiple community outreach programs designed for youth and schools. See the Community Outreach Programs guidebook.

e) Police-Community Reconciliation

For Committee discussion

f) Attention to Marginalized Communities

• Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Citizens

When there is a police/community member interaction or engagement involving a language barrier, officers will attempt to locate an officer who speaks the preferred language to facilitate communications. If none can be located, alternate translation services will attempt to be sought if the situation allows.

• Citizens with communication disabilities:

In the Police Academy and Yonkers Police Training Division, new officers are trained in interacting with those with disabilities. The Community Affairs Division manages the First Responder Disability Registry, an outreach program designed to allow special needs community members to register their address with the police for advanced information sharing prior to a response.

• The LGBTQIA+ Community:

The Yonkers Police Department has a police officer committee member on the Mayor's LGBTQIA+ Advisory Board who serves as a liaison between the police and LGBTQIA+ community.

• Immigrant Communities

The Department partners with many community based organizations that represent immigrant communities (Catholic Charities, Mexican-American Chamber of Commerce, etc.) and work together to address local concerns and issues. The Yonkers Police Department has a policy of not inquiring as to an immigration status to ensure immigrant population feels safe contacting the police and foster trust.

g) Involving Youth in Discussions on the Role of Law Enforcement Agencies

Refer back to the Community Outreach Programs guidebook designed for youth engagement which presents opportunities for relationship building.

SECTION III.

FOSTERING COMMUNITY-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Leadership and Culture

Is your leadership selection process designed to produce the police community relationship you want?

All rank promotions are NYS Civil Service based and require examination. Appointments are typically based on merit, experience, and training background. See policy 130-16.

Does your officer evaluation structure help advance your policing goals?

Formal evaluations are conducted during the field training process for new police officers, occurring daily for several months; CLSA members are evaluated annually. There is currently no formal evaluation process for PBA members as it changes their working conditions and is subject to bargaining as per law (See attached 130-17). Officers are informally evaluated by their supervisors and superiors on a daily basis and are subject to documented instances of praise or complaints.

What incentives does your department offer officers to advance policing goals?

The Captains, Sergeants, Lieutenants, Association (CLSA) offers financial incentives for higher educational degrees, and training is a component of merit-based appointments.

Does your hiring and promotion process help build an effective and diverse leadership team?

All hiring and rank promotions are done in accordance with NYS Civil Service Law. See attached 130-16.

What is your strategy to ensure that your department's cultural-norms and informal processes reflect your formal rules and policies?

Members are required to adhere to policy and procedure and are subject to discipline when violations occur. Discipline includes verbal, training, counseling and/or punitive actions.

2. Tracking and Reviewing Use of Force and Identifying Misconduct

When should officers be required to report use of force to their supervisor?

See attached policies 120-03 and 120-05.

What internal review is required after a use of force?

See attached policies 120-03 and 120-05.

Does your department review officers' use of force and/or misconduct during performance reviews?

The Yonkers Police Department does not conduct performance reviews; however, all use of force is reviewed by a supervisor.

Does your department use external, independent reviewers to examine uses of force or misconduct?

Use of force incidents may be reviewed by civilian members of the Police Professional Standard Review Committee – see policy 130-11.

Any use of force that may be considered criminal conduct is referred to the Westchester County District Attorney's Office.

Does your department leverage Early Intervention Systems (EIS) to prevent problematic behavior?

See policy 130-05.

Does your department review "sentinel" or "near-miss" events? Does the department respond to questionable uses of force with non-punitive measures designed to improve officer performance?

See policy 130-05.

3. Internal Accountability for Misconduct

What does your department expect of officers who know of misconduct by another officer?

See policy 120-05.

Does your department have a clear and transparent process for investigating reports of misconduct?

See policies 130-01 and 130-02.

Does your department respond to officer misconduct with appropriate disciplinary measures?

See policies 130-01 and 130-02.

What procedures are in place to ensure that substantiated complaints of misconduct and settlements or adverse verdicts in lawsuits are used to reduce the risk of future misconduct?

Early intervention, use of force reporting, and investigation/progressive discipline are all designed to establish records and results of officer behavior and Department action.

What controls are in place to ensure impartiality when reviewing potential misconduct or complaints? When appropriate, are cases referred to either the District Attorney or another prosecutor?

When the circumstances are appropriate, cases are referred to the DA's Office by either Internal Affairs or the Police. The Department of Justice has also been reviewing YPD's internal investigations for several years.

Does your department expect leaders and officers to uphold the department's values and culture when off-duty?

See policies 120-01, 120-02, 120-08, 130-08, 130-18.

4. Citizen Oversight and Other External Accountability

Does or should your department have some form of civilian oversight over misconduct investigations or policy reform?

Police Professional Standards Review Committee – see attached policy 130-11.

Is there an easy, accessible and well-publicized process for members of the public to report complaints about police misconduct?

Complaints can be made in the following manner:

- In Person At Any Yonkers Police Facility
- In Person At The Internal Affairs Office Located At 36 Radford St (Map)
- By Mail To The Internal Affairs Office Located At 36 Radford St, Yonkers, NY 10705
- By Phone 914-377-7332 OR 24 Hour Number 914-377-7331
- By Fax 914-377-7335
- Download Citizen Complaint Form at www.yonkersny.gov
- Download Citizen Complaint Form - Spanish at www.yonkersny.gov

Access to this information can be found on the City of Yonkers website www.yonkersny.gov.

Are investigation outcomes reported to the complainant? Are they reported to the public? Should the department or the citizen complaint review entity, if any, accept anonymous complaints?

The outcome is generally reported to the complainant, however not the public. Section 50A of the New York Civil Rights Law, is currently in litigation. YPD accepts anonymous complaints.

**Does your local legislature engage in formal oversight of the police department?
Should any changes be made in the legislature's oversight powers or responsibilities?**

The local legislature, the Yonkers City Council, has budget oversight of YPD.

Is your police department accredited by any external entity?

YPD is accredited by New York State DCJS

Does Your Police Department Do an Annual Community Survey to Track Level of Trust?

YPD has conducted community surveys for the last two years and has contracted with Yale University, as part of procedural justice, to conduct another survey in 2021.

5. Data, Technology and Transparency

What police incident and complaint data should be collected? What data should be available to the public?

All available incident data is collected, including victim, witness, and suspect pedigree information.

This information is collected in a police report, which is then generally available by a Freedom of Information Law Request.

Certain information may be redacted by law to protect an individual's personal information or sensitive investigatory details (youth information, HIPAA related information, confidential information, etc.)

How should your law enforcement agency leverage data to drive policing strategies?

YPD engages in the precision policing strategy, which is driven by data analysis.

How can your police department demonstrate a commitment to transparency in its interactions with the public?

YPD actively engages media outlets to share information; posts information on social media, and the internet, is currently piloting body-worn cameras; and has expanded outreach programs to increase police/community interactions. Currently, YPD is exploring public crime mapping through Motorola Solutions.

How can your police department make its policies and procedures more transparent?

All policies and procedures are currently available through a Freedom of Information Law Request.

How can your police department ensure adequate transparency in its use of automated systems and “high-risk” technologies?

These tools may be used for criminal investigations to help locate suspects of serious crimes or even for missing person cases to locate an endangered person. None of these tools by themselves would establish probable cause for effecting an arrest without additional, corroborative information.

Should your police department leverage video cameras to ensure law enforcement accountability and increase transparency?

YPD is currently in the pilot phase of a body-worn camera program.

When should officers be required to turn on their BWCs? When interacting with members of the public? When conducting a law enforcement investigation?

When should officers be required to notify members of the public that BWCs are on? In private settings? In public settings?

What should the penalties be for non-compliance?

How long should the department maintain footage?

Under what conditions should footage be accessible to officers, the public, or investigators?

For the above questions, see policies 120-36.

Yonkers Police Reform Committee Members

Gail Baxter	Hudson River Community Association
Dr. Jim Bostic, TH.D	Nepperhan Community Center, Executive Director
Daniel Campanini	YPD, Deputy Chief
Rev. Frank Coleman	NAACP, Yonkers Chapter, President
Lakisha Collins-Bellamy, Esq.	Yonkers Board of Education Trustee/Attorney
Hon. Tasha Diaz	Yonkers City Council, Third District
Autumn Edwards	YPD, Officer
Pauline Galvin, Esq.	Yonkers Civil Service Commission/Attorney
Carmen Goldberg	Charter School of Educational Excellence
Rev. James Hassell	Kingdom Christian Cultural Center
Charlie Knight	YWCA, CEO/Executive Director
Doreen Lloyd, Esq.	Yonkers Bureau Chief, Westchester County DA's Office
Darryl Mack	Yonkers Public Schools, Assistant Principal
Donnell McCall	Community member
Carlos Moran	Mayor's Representative (Chair)
Keith Olson	Yonkers Police Benevolence Association, President
Lucia Ortiz	YMCA, CEO/President
Michael Sabatino	LGBTQIA community member
Vincent Tyler	YPD, Retired Detective
Lt. Charles Walker	YPD/Yonkers Guardians Assoc., President
Cecilia Zuniga-Espiritu	La Piñata, business owner
Rocco DeRose	Community Member
Jonathan Alvarez	Community Member
Joshua Heron	MBK Student Leader
Akeem Jamal	Community Member



MAYOR MIKE SPANO